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The Magazine of Mystery and Horror

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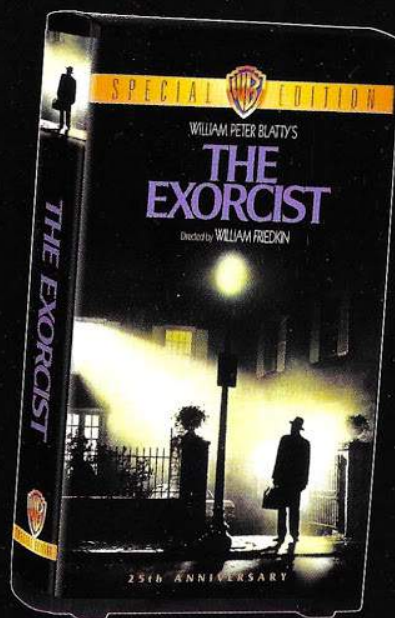


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COVER: Jack Betts as Boris Karloff, Ian McKellen as James Whale, and Rosalind Ayres as Elsa Lanchester in *GODS AND MONSTERS* (1998), Anne Darling and Boris Karloff in *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1935).

Scarlet Letters

Thanks for the great interview with Audrey Totter (*Scarlet Street* #29). I had a boyhood crush on Ms. Totter when I saw her in wartorn London in *THE COCKEYED MIRACLE* (called *MR. GRIGGS RETURNS* over there).

When in the early fifties I became an American International Pictures producer, I couldn't afford her in my 10-day black and white drive-in movies. Finally in 1958, after her marriage and some infrequent appearances, I managed to sign her for the co-lead with John Agar in *JET ATTACK*. She played a Russian doctor in Korea. Edward L. Cahn, who directed her in one of her first movies at MGM, *MAIN STREET AFTER DARK*, was our director.

For 10 whole days I had the pleasure of discussing every one of her movies with her and she was as delightful in person as she was on the screen. Don't miss her best performance, in MGM's *TENSION*, when it repeats on TCM.

Alex Gordon
Studio City, CA

I wanted to drop a note in praise of Rick McKay's interview/profile of Lawrence Tierney (Issue #29), which set a new high-water mark for *Scarlet Street*. A superb job all the way around. I find that I am also unable to resist responding to the unnamed gal letter-writer from the same issue, who took such umbrage at the mention of Humphrey Bogart's height, or lack thereof, citing it as a lapse in fact-checking. As any writer/researcher working with film subjects knows, gauging the true height of a movie star is very difficult (unless you've met them), since studio publicity flacks in the old days tended to lie like rugs. For the record, I've heard Bogie's height placed as low as 5'4" (perhaps not far from the truth, if one considers the final shot of *CASABLANCA*, in which Bogart and 5'5" Claude Rains disappear into the fog—they appear to be the same height.) As a rule of thumb, any time you see a Golden Age actor's height mentioned in a studio press release or pressbook, and even in many biographies, subtract two inches.

I would, however, like to point out a couple errors, or perhaps typos, in Kevin G. Shinnick's interview with Robert Wise. Shouldn't "Golden Studios" be Goldwyn Studios? And "MGM Border One," mentioned as the studio where *THE HAUNTING* was filmed, is MGM Boreham Wood.

Michael Mallory
Glendale, CA

Aw, c'mon, Mike—you mean to say you've never heard of Golden Studios and MGM Border One? Never? Well... uhh... neither have we. The error was

ours, not Kevin's: when we scanned in the text of the interview, modern technology, like Dr. Bohmer, played us a trick. Then, after the errors were caught and corrected, modern technology played a second trick and mysteriously reverted to the uncorrected text. At least, we think it was modern technology. It certainly can't have been the guy at the computer....

Being the token Republican on the staff of *Scarlet Street* has its interesting moments. We always manage to keep our friendships regardless of our widely disparate personal views of the world, and while it has gotten a bit tense at times in the past (at least for me, the surrounded one), I like to think we've known each other long enough to remember we're all still friends, and opinions are just that; meant to be shared and discussed with a minimum of physical injury. I've always wondered how I'd react if you guys were brash enough to publish something that was clearly offensive to something I believed in strongly—would I have to quit? Ask to have my name removed from that issue? Send you a nasty letter? Get my mommy to beat up your mommies? Well, I fig-

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Zacherley



ured, screw it, it's all just opinions and in the end I have too good a time with everybody to go and get all pissed. Hence, rather than a nasty letter, this polite rebuttal to Richard's caption on the *PLANET OF THE APES* photo in issue #28, wherein the two apes with Chuck Heston were identified as members of the National Rifle Association. I know it was too hard to resist.

As I'm sure you guys know, I'm a member of the ape... uh, NRA, and I enjoy collecting and shooting firearms. It's always distressed me that the media (not just the one I work for) habitually misunderstand the NRA, and often seem to intentionally misrepresent the organization's policy or state it as the opposite of what it actually is. I am not a spokesperson for the Association's position, but I'd like to try to describe it as I understand it from a member/gun collector/hobbyist shooter's point of view. The National Rifle Association is this country's oldest civil rights organization. Their interest, as you can see by their title, is primarily in supporting and defending the second article of the Bill of Rights. While they're usually portrayed in the media and entertainment industry as, to paraphrase Woody Allen in *SLEEPER*, "an organization that takes guns away from private citizens and gives them to criminals," that is in fact the direct opposite of their stated cause. The goal of the NRA is to find ways to allow private citizens who do not break the law to own firearms for defense and recreation, while also finding ways to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, and punish those who use guns to hurt people. To this end, the NRA maintains civilian firearm safety training programs, civilian and police marksmanship training programs, and shooting competitions. The NRA's legislative action section proposes and backs legislation with harsh penalties for criminals who use guns, and urges stronger enforcement of existing penalties. They also fight any legislation perceived as infringing on the rights of the lawful private gun-owner that also does nothing to contain or prevent real crime. They have public education programs to inform people of the facts as they see them, and to teach children to stay the hell away from guns.

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#HALLOWEEN TREATS

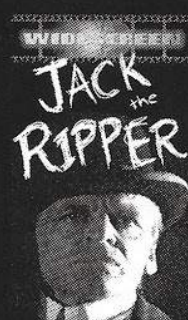


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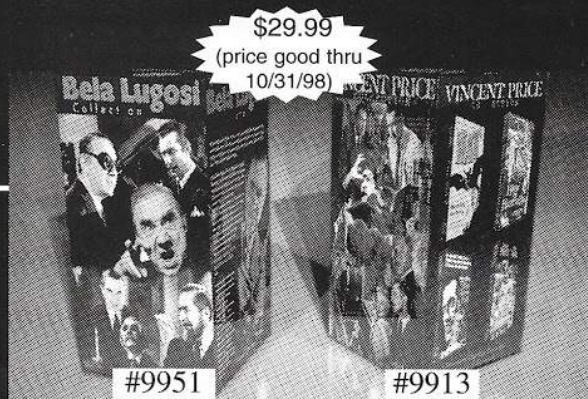
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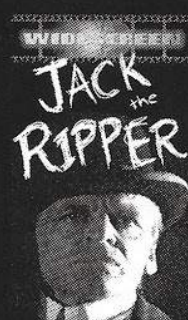


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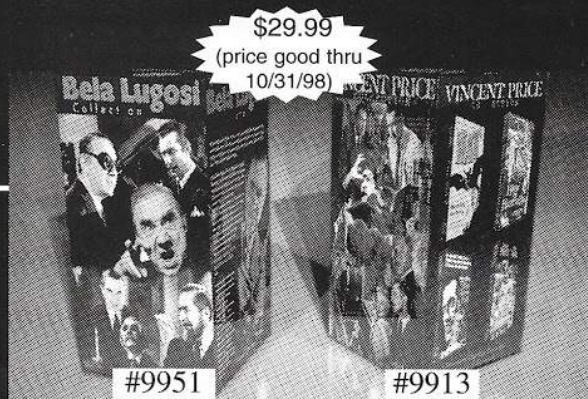
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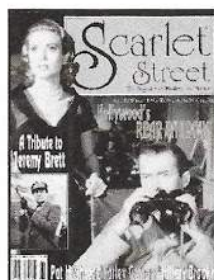
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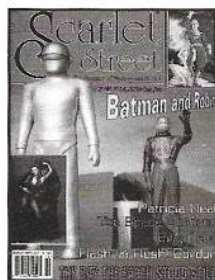
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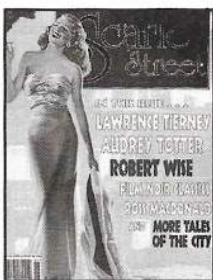
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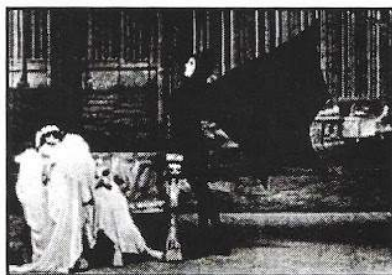
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SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 4

Imagine how *Scarlet Street's* readers (and staff members) would feel if a political force decided that horror films were the cause of violent crime in the country. It's not that far-fetched, is it? People who don't understand us fans are always screaming that violent movies cause violent crime. We know it's bull, but we can't convince them because they don't understand. Imagine politically-backed organizations running TV and print ad campaigns against horror films. Imagine local, state, and federal bodies creating 25,000 laws nationwide to ban or control horror films. That's how many gun laws there are, and we have a constitutional amendment on our side just like you do! Now imagine how *Scarlet Street's* gay readers (and staff members) would feel if a political force decided that homosexuality was evil and needed to be legislated out of existence. Oh. Wait. You already know. Okay, so now we know how each other feels. The NRA is doing its best to do what a lot of people feel is right (and I don't mean that as opposed to "left").

I always thought it was highly unfair that practitioners of the first amendment may use it to slander the second amendment, while practitioners of the second would never dream of using it to, um, remind practitioners of the first

of their responsibility to the truth. Well, we can dream, can't we?

John E. Payne
Oakland, NJ

Did I mention that I loved the caption for the PLANET OF THE APES still in my last RECORD RACK column? According to recent headlines, it's more timely than ever.

Ross Care
Ojai, CA

It's no good making fun of the NRA pres. Even if you took his guns away, Heston could hit you over the head with one of his performances.

Victor Bassett
Miami, FL

Does this magazine have an agenda or what? I am continually shocked shocked shocked at the homoerotic content of your publication. As I was telling my much younger, live-in male roommate the other day, "These people are obsessed with the gay subtext of absolutely every movie they see." My friend, once he was finished working on his abs, read through the magazine, or at least the captions, and could not help but agree with me. "Look at what Audrey Totter is wearing in this still. It's simply hideous! It makes her look so-o-o fat!" he exclaimed. Needless to

say, the point is this: next you'll be telling your readers that Franklin Pangborn was gay!

By the way, is your Chris Atkins issue still available?

Actually, in all seriousness, I am about halfway through the new issue and I must say that the Lawrence Tierney interview is just about the best thing I've ever read. Fascinating! Or as Judy Holliday would say: "Soo-poiib."

You've probably already gotten several E-mails from the rabid Bond fanatics, but I thought I'd point out to your CALL ME BWANA reviewer, John F. Black, the other James Bond connection he forgot to mention. In FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE, the billboard for CALL ME BWANA figures prominently in a key sequence: Pedro Armendariz has to shoot a Russian assassin who is trying to escape from the building behind the sign by climbing down a rope from Anita Ekberg's mouth!

Barry Monush
Metuchen, NJ

All these many years of being a fan, and only now do I finally learn all about the great Warner Oland, or as I like to call him, "Chuckie Chan." (*Scarlet Street* #28)

For years I've been frustrated by the fact that CHARLIE CHAN IN LON-

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Frankly Scarlet



Okay, okay, so he did make my acting partner, Chris Santy, and me play a scene from DEATH OF A SALESMAN in our jockey shorts, but I've always been very fond of the late, great William Hickey, not the least because he thought I was a pretty good actor. (Besides, I had a size 28 waist in those days—painfully thin, according to a short-time companion—and I didn't mind doing a Gypsy Rose Lee, not even for a play whose most famous line is "Attention must be paid.") Actually, now that I think of it, Chris and I began the scene fully dressed. However, during the course of the action, in which we played Willie Loman's worshipful sons Biff and Happy, we gradually doffed shoes, socks, shirts, and pants, then proceeded to put on each other's clothes. I've no idea why Bill Hickey thought this was a good acting exercise (other than the obvious one: that Bill wanted to see us in our undies), but I still remember the future Oscar nominee telling me, apropos my performance, "You know you can do it, so get out there and do it."

Well, I knew I could do it, sorta, but I never did get around to doing it "out there." Out there meant auditions, and auditioning requires a certain kind of nerve that eludes me. It was so much easier, I discovered, to write plays and send them out into the world to audition for me. If they were rejected, I wasn't there dripping sweat. If they "got the job" (and a few did), then all the better . . .

So it naturally followed that I made my motion picture debut by proxy, when *Scarlet Street: The Magazine of Mystery and Horror* flashed across the screen in Fred Olen Ray's ATTACK OF THE 60 FOOT CENTERFOLD (1995). And it followed again that, when the request came in from associate producer Kacy Andrews at Dancing Productions, Inc., it wasn't for me to join a cast that already included Sean Connery, Gillian Anderson, Ellen Burstyn, Anthony Edwards, Dennis Quaid, Gena Rowlands, Jon Stewart, Madeleine Stowe, and the currently hotter than hot Ryan Philippe (pictured here in last year's fright flick I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER), it was

for *Scarlet Street* to make a cameo appearance in a picture called DANCING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE.

Well, now, I can't lend *Scarlet Street*'s name to just any enterprise, you understand, so after giving the matter serious consideration for, oh, one or two seconds, I quickly consented. Then I began to wonder: why *Scarlet Street*? I got back in touch with Kacy, explained that we were all very flattered (which, indeed, we were), and asked why *Scarlet Street* of all mags had been chosen for this singular honor. The cheery reply came not from Kacy, but from the film's writer and director, Willard Carroll: "Because I love *Scarlet Street*! Is that a good enough reason?"

Good enough for me!

According to the brief synopsis we received shortly thereafter, DANCING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE is "a multi-



generational exploration of love." Well, so's *Scarlet Street*, except that we toss in a few monsters and murders for good measure. So look for us in a bookstore scene, being read by a chap named Bosco, when Miramax Films distributes DANCING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE in the future . . . where all of us will be spending the rest of our lives.

Speaking of our sparkling subheading *The Magazine of Mystery and Horror*, I'd quite forgotten that it stems from what many consider the very best horror movie of all time: Universal's BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1935). In the film's prologue, when Lord Byron (Gavin Gordon) entreates Mary Shelley (Elsa Lanchester) to elaborate on the story that was FRANKENSTEIN (1931), the fragile beauty replies:

I feel like telling it. It's a perfect night for mystery and horror. The air itself is filled with monsters.

Mosquitos, no doubt—but what better time to quote this delectable speech than now, in our 30th issue, which devotes page after page to BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, its director, James Whale, and even its most eccentric supporting player, the astonishing Ernest Thesiger? The BRIDE issue of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (#21) has always been my favorite edition of that once magnificent magazine, and I hope this issue of *Scarlet Street* finds its way into the hearts of both old and new fright fans today. (After we find our way into your heart, we'll pluck it out and sell it—why should Dwight Frye be the only organ donor in town?)

Our BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN coverage is sparked by the new fictionalized biopic of the film's director, James Whale. It's called GODS AND MONSTERS, it's based on the Christopher Bram novel *Father of Frankenstein* (covered in SS #26), it's executive-produced by Clive Barker (interview on page 28), and it's directed by Bill Condon (interview on page 33). I've seen the movie five times, now, and I can't possibly recommend it more highly. Run, do not walk, to whatever movie house in your area shows this extraordinary piece of cinema artistry. It's due to open some time in October, so keep your eyes out—but do remember to stick 'em back in when the movie begins!

In recent months, *Scarlet Street* has undergone a few changes with our distributors, and in some areas this unfortunately resulted in our temporarily being left out of stores in which we previously had been proudly displayed. The result: a ton of letters, E-mails, and phone calls from anxious Streeters wondering what had become of their fave mag.

Well, we're here to tell ya that we're still here to tell ya. Our temporary absence was just that: temporary! *Scarlet Street* should once again be at your fingerprints—pardon; fingertips—in your neighborhood comic-book specialty shop, and in such stores as Barnes and Noble, Tower Records, Hastings, B. Dalton, Waldenbooks, and Virgin Megastores.

But if we're not in sight, you, our faithful readers, can help. Just ask for the Mag Person and repeat these magic words: "Where the heck is *Scarlet Street*?" Then, if you're not directed to the nearest red-light district, you're likely to get a copy of this very magazine!

Seriously, gang, if we're missing from your local shelves, you can help bring *Scarlet Street* to the world. Ask for us, and keep asking till you get us. You'll be glad you did . . .

Richard Valley

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SCARLET LETTERS

Continued from page 8

DON was the earliest of the Chan series in circulation. It was as if, among the 007 films, the earliest available were DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER or LIVE AND LET DIE. (Imagine!)

A few odd points. You didn't mention THE HOUSE WITHOUT A KEY, the 1926 serial that starred George Kuwa as Chan—the earliest film appearance I've read about. I'm surprised you say that CHARLIE CHAN CARRIES ON is the only Oland Chan film to have never been available for TV. I've never seen the other four listed! Just how do movies "become lost" after having been available for TV in the first place? And while, to my knowledge, CHARLIE CHAN IN EGYPT wasn't one of the series that turned up recently on AMC, I have a copy of it off my local Philly Channel 17, which 20 years ago used to run the "entire" series on a regular basis, in sequence, at the rate of one a week. Oh, if only AMC would do that—and not just with the Chans, but with all those Tarzan films they've been showing this year!

Not to knock Roger Moore's THE SAINT—his early episodes were mostly based, some closely, on the original Leslie Charteris stories—but to my mind, the only actor who really captured the attitude and character of Simon Templar, as established in the books, was Louis Hayward. THE SAINT IN NEW

YORK is my favorite film—and I only wish it had had a decent budget! By the way, I do believe Robert S. Baker was also responsible for the excellent RETURN OF THE SAINT, with Ian Ogilvy. My goodness—was there ever a more handsome, dashing hero on TV?

Wonderful to read about the Ian Richardson Sherlock Holmes films. For all the Rathbone "purists" out there, I still recall thinking Christopher Plummer was the first actor to equal him—and Richardson the first to surpass him! (And imagine my delight when, not long after, Jeremy Brett surpassed Richardson!) "What a great time for Holmes fans," was the thought I had those 15 years back.

I'm glad someone pointed out the "Americanization" of those two films. I once viewed six different versions of *The Hound of The Baskervilles* in the course of one week. While the Brett version was the most "accurate," and the Tom Baker a close second, the Richardson stands to date as the most lavish. And funny enough—when I took notes while watching, to compare differences in characters and details, I found an interesting thing. The Richardson film deviates from the novel in the same places that the Basil Rathbone film does! So in effect, Sy Weintraub wasn't doing a new version of the book—he was doing a remake of the Rathbone film!

Henry R. Kujawa
Camden, NJ

THE BLACK CAMEL (1931) is not lost, Henry, but there is still no trace of CHARLIE CHAN'S CHANCE (1932), CHARLIE CHAN'S GREATEST CASE (1933), and CHARLIE CHAN'S COURAGE (1934). The terrific CHARLIE CHAN IN EGYPT (1935) is part of the current AMC package, however.

Please feature Lex Barker, the handsomest star with magnificent body, in one of your issue. Plenty, I really mean it, plenty of photos of this greatest Tarzan of all time. Even though Lex went to heaven 25 years ago but as fans we have not forgotten him.

Max Wein
San Francisco, CA

I enjoy reading your magazine and have been a fan for many years now. I have a problem that has nothing to do with the fine writing or the interviews you print. I would like to find an old movie that was on television several years ago. I believe the movie was called SPECTER. I believe Robert Culp and Gig Young starred in it. About a year ago, my mother saw the end on the Sci-Fi Channel through the local cable company.

We are limited here in Albuquerque as far as finding rare videos. The local video stores have had no luck finding this movie or even telling us if this movie can be found. We would appreciate your advice on how to obtain SPEC-

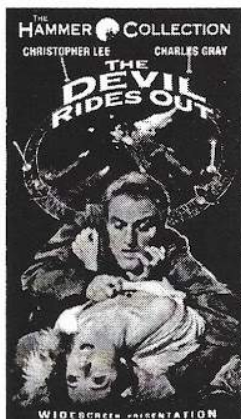
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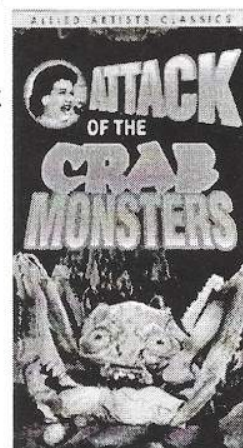
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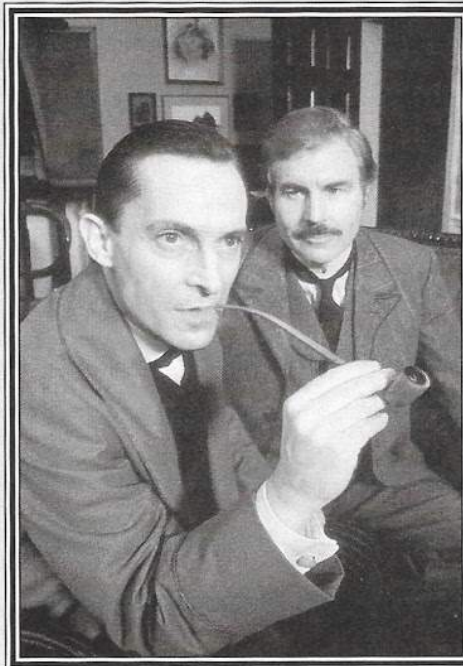
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TER and another old TV movie called THE NORLISS TAPES. If you have any information about these movies, it would be very much appreciated.

Again, thank you for your many years of publishing your magazine. I have found your magazine not only entertaining, but very useful in the information it provides on upcoming movies and "not known" facts about previous movies.

Leslie J. Turner
Albuquerque, NM

SPECTER was a TV pilot produced by STAR TREK creator Gene Roddenberry. THE NORLISS TAPES was another pilot, this one from the production offices of Dan Curtis. It was meant to replace the series of NIGHT STALKER films when Darren McGavin refused to ever work with Curtis again. Unfortunately, neither film is legally available on video.

Ever since Scarlet Street #26 I've been meaning to write. Being the terrible procrastinator that I am, I kept putting it off. However, when I picked up SS #27 last week, I knew I'd better get typing.

That said, I just wanted to let you know how wonderful I thought both issues were. They're two of the finest (if not the finest) you've done. The David Manners interview is a classic. Rick McKay's ability to make a wonderful, insightful interview with little discussion of the films we hold so dear, and still

grab us, is nothing short of genius.

I love Gary Don Rhodes' article on the Universal revival of the late thirties. Whoever says there's nothing new to be mined from the history of the genre need only read this. While the subject has been mentioned in books and articles in the past, it's usually nothing more than an oversized footnote. Excellent work, Gary!

Thanks also for your excellent article and interview with Stephen Geoffreys. Being a close friend of Steve's Uncle David for many years, I've followed his career closely. While things have been a bit rocky for him lately, he's an incredible talent and hopefully he'll be back doing great things again soon.

Joe Busam
Cincinnati, OH

We second your hopes for Stephen Geoffreys, Joe. Meanwhile, we'll have more on David Manners in our next issue. Don't miss it!

While I was reading Drew Sullivan's thoroughly engaging review of VAMPIRE CIRCUS (SS #28) and understanding his lament that the male beauty of John Moulder-Brown and Anthony Corlan (later Higgins) was not fully appreciated, I began to think back on their careers and discovered some reassuring news for Mr. Sullivan.

In John Moulder-Brown's second picture with Jerzy Skolimowski, KING,

QUEEN, KNAVE (1973, based on Vladimir Nabokov's book), he became the object of Gina Lollobrigida's desire—a desire that often drove her into a frenzy that eventually risked her plush life with David Niven. Young, virginal Moulder-Brown floated through the picture with the insouciance of young men who just aren't in sync with their sexual allure.

In Anthony Corlan's film with Harold Price, SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE (1970, scripted by Hugh Wheeler), he became the love object of a bisexual opportunist played by Michael York, who, when confronted with his infidelity with the question, "You can sleep with anyone, can't you?", replied softly, "Yes, but I do have my preferences."

So, Mr. Sullivan, a year after VAMPIRE CIRCUS, John Moulder-Brown and, two years before VAMPIRE CIRCUS, Anthony Corlan came into their own—as breathtaking young men, whose sexual magnetism could stand a film on its head.

Raymond Banacki
Brooklyn, NY

John Moulder-Brown fans will find a revealing two-part interview with their fave in Scarlet Streets #7 and #8.

I've always enjoyed the laserdisc reviews in Scarlet Street, but since the format has all but been eclipsed by DVD, I think it is time you started covering that

format as well. Don't get me wrong, I love laserdisc, but DVDs are better, less expensive, and more convenient. In addition, some really obscure genre films are being released complete with audio commentaries, outtakes, etc., and I for one would love to hear what your staff has to say about the new incarnations. It is surprising that titles like VAMPYROS LESBOS and GANJA and HESS have appeared on the relatively new format already. In addition, Warner Home Video has announced a whole new line of classic DVD titles that will be priced as low as \$14.98 retail!

Steve Phillips
PhillipsS@ally.com

Rest assured, *Scarlet Street* will be reviewing DVDs, perhaps as soon as next issue, but we're not quite as sold on them as you, Steve. (Nor are we happy that stores have relegated lasers to dark, tiny corners of their inventory in an effort to force-feed consumers DVDs.) Many DVDs are priced as highly as lasers, have fewer extras, and more than a few have been found lacking in that much-publicized superior picture quality. And with such titles as those you'll find reviewed in this issue still being released on laser, we're not as ready and eager as some to pronounce a death sentence on the format.

I go ape over Lex (Tarzan) Barker. Hope you would feature him in a long article with all those large-size photos of him.

I am a Tarzan fan. Of all the actors who played the Jungle Lord, Lex Barker is my most favorite. It's time to have a tribute of this gorgeous Sexy Lexy, the real Tarzan of all!

Kevin Wood
Tahiti
HMMMMMMMM . . .

I wanted to write and let you know how much I've enjoyed your magazine *Scarlet Street* over the years. You write articles on obscure or forgotten stars who are never written about anymore, and I greatly enjoy it.

I especially enjoyed your issue featuring Charlie Chan, Warner Oland, and Keye Luke. (SS #28) Great articles and pictures for my Charlie Chan collection.

I would suggest that in the near future you do an in-depth article on my favorite Chan, Sidney Toler. I have never seen an article about him and his life in any publication. I think it is long overdue. He had a long stage and film career before doing the Chans, and I would like to know about all of it, if he had any children, has any living descendants, and if his last wife Viva Tattersall, a sculptress, is still alive, and where he is buried.

Another wonderful but forgotten performer I would like to see covered is Gertrude Niesen, the singer/actress who was popular in the thirties, forties, and fifties. As with Toler, I have never

seen an article on her in any publication.

Sharon D. Lindy
Oak Part, IL

Fear not, Faithful Sharon, we'll be getting around to all the Charlie Chans in due time, not to mention his numbered progeny. Stay tuned . . .

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the NEWS



HOUND

Welcome back, Scarlet Streeters, to your Canine Correspondent's corner of the Street, where you'll always find the latest lowdown on upcoming media mayhem . . .

Theatrical Thrills

Your local movie theater becomes a stake house when John Carpenter's long-delayed action-horror flick *VAMPIRES* finally hits the screens this fall (or so claims Columbia Pictures). James Woods and *TWIN PEAKS*' Sheryl Lee costar.

In September, filmgoers in New York City and Los Angeles can catch a big-screen 40th anniversary reissue of Orson Welles' terrific *noir* thriller *TOUCH OF EVIL* (1958) in a restored director's cut. The new version has been re-edited according to recently discovered notes by Welles. The director himself stars as an obese bordertown police chief who makes things *muy malo* for Mexican-American cop Chuck Heston and his beautiful blonde wife, Janet Leigh (who at one point is menaced in a cheap motel while clad in a fifties bullet bra—sound familiar, Mr. Hitchcock?). A video and laser release of the newly retouched *TOUCH* will surely follow.

Creepy tales start coming to life for a bunch of predictably attractive college students in the Sony release *URBAN LEGEND*, starring Jared Leto and Rebecca Gayheart. It's due in theaters in October, along with *THE 13TH FLOOR*, a virtual-reality sci-fi thriller produced by *GODZILLA* boy Roland Emmerich; *ROCKET BOYS* (Universal), a fifties-set tale from director Joe Johnston (*JUMANJI*) about teenagers who build their own space ship; and *PRACTICAL MAGIC* (Warner Bros.), a mystical comedy starring witchy women Sandra Bullock, Nicole Kidman, Stockard Channing, and Vanessa Redgrave.

In November, Brad Pitt and Anthony Hopkins star in *MEET JOE BLACK*, Universal's remake of the 1934 Fredric March fantasy *DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY*. Other November releases include *JACK FROST* (Warner Bros.) starring Michael Keaton as a snowman (trading up from a Batman?) and the Columbia sequel *I STILL KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER* starring many dead teenagers.

Universal's universally-dreaded remake of *PSYCHO* is scheduled to slice its way into theaters in December (to her everlasting credit, plucky Janet Leigh refused a cameo, opting instead to appear

in her psychomobile in *HALLOWEEN H2O*), together with even more remakes and sequels: *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG* (Disney), *STAR TREK 9* (Paramount), *FROM DUSK TILL DAWN: TEXAS BLOOD MONEY* (Dimension), plus a Christmas rerelease of *THE WIZARD OF OZ*.

Future Creature Features

In Universal's *END OF DAYS*, Satan hits The Big Apple on millennium eve and starts spreadin' the news that he's in search of a bride. (If he can make it there, he can make it anywhere.) But along comes ex-cop Arnold Schwarzenegger to ruin Old Scratch's nookie plans! Andrew Marlowe of *AIR FORCE*

aptation of Annette Curtis Klause's young-adult novel *Blood and Chocolate*. (Two of The Hound's favorite things.)

GOOD WILL HUNTING's Matt Damon hunts down a missing heir and murders him in the suspense drama *THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY*, now in production from Miramax. It's based on the bisexually-chic-before-its-time novel by Patricia Highsmith, author of *Strangers on a Train*. Gwyneth Paltrow costars in the thriller, which Oscar-winner Anthony Mingella is directing from his own script. *RIPLEY*, believe it or not, has already been filmed quite nicely by French director Rene Clement as *PURPLE NOON* in 1960. Alain Delon starred.

Buffy Gets Blown Up (And Other Rumors)

Writer/producer Joss Whedon will do a Chris Carter next summer when he mounts a feature-film version of his TV series *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER*. Stars Sarah Michelle Gellar and Anthony Stewart Head are rumored to have already signed on for the feature, with the rest of the Sunnydale High regulars hopefully following suit.

BATMAN 5 rumors are circulating about *ARMAGEDDON*'s Ben Affleck donning the cape and cowl in a new film series based on the *Batman: Year One* comic book by Frank Miller. Only time will tell whether the Brothers Warner will swing their Bat in this radically retro direction.

Demi Moore has won the role of Lara Croft in the upcoming film version of the video game *TOMB RAIDER*. Moore reportedly beat out Elizabeth Hurley for the role of the Indy Jones-style action heroine. Raven-haired beauty Catherine Zeta Jones (of *THE PHANTOM* and *THE MASK OF ZORRO*) has landed the lead role of a doomed forties playgirl in *THE BLACK DAHLIA*, director David Fincher's upcoming film version of the novel by L. A. Confidential author James Ellroy.

Couch Potato Cinema

Zoinks! Mike Myers has been hired to write the screenplay for a live-action version of the Hanna-Barbera cartoon series *SCOOPY-DOO, WHERE ARE YOU?* Myers may possibly headline the film as well, but whether he'll sign on to play Shaggy, Velma, or Scooby himself is a puzzle worthy of the Mystery Machine gang.



Janet Leigh cringes in terror as Charlton Heston tries to explain that motels don't kill people; people kill people. A public service announcement from *TOUCH OF EVIL* (1958).

ONE wrote the script, so expect things to crash and blow up.

Things are getting hairy for young Jennifer Love Hewitt, star of TV's *PARTY OF FIVE* and the aforementioned scare sequel *I STILL KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER*. *Entertainment Weekly* reports that Hewitt will portray the daughter in a werewolf family who finds lycanthrope love with a (gasp) human boy in an MGM film ad-

Continued on page 17

Kathleen Turner: *You're not too smart, are you? I like that in a man.*

William Hurt: *What else do you like? Lazy, ugly, horny, I got 'em all . . .*

Kathleen Turner: *You don't look lazy.*

BODY HEAT (1981) is one of the finest examples of a "modern" film noir exercise. Lawrence Kasdan's original screenplay certainly derives artistic inspiration from Billy Wilder's classic *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* (1944). William Hurt portrays a randy, sweat-stained attorney who can't resist the enticement of Kathleen Turner's overheated femme fatale. The sun-drenched Florida locale provides an oppressively steamy ambience which further fuels these characters.

William Hurt: *I need tending. I need someone to take care of me, someone to rub my tired muscles, smooth out my sheets . . .*

Kathleen Turner: *Get married.*

William Hurt: *I just need it for tonight!*

Though obviously inspired by the classic noirs of the past, *BODY HEAT* has more than a few cool tricks up its sleeves, including eccentric, show-stopping turns by Ted Danson (in an approximation of *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*'s Edward G. Robinson role) and Mickey Rourke (as an ex-con before it seemed likely that he might become one in real life).

A major ingredient of the film's intoxicating effect is the John Barry score. The music contributes a hauntingly repetitive sense of melancholia, of passions unwisely spent and mistakes doomed to be repeated.

Surprisingly, Barry's score has heretofore received only limited distribution. In 1983, Southern Cross Records released an LP containing roughly half an hour of its music. The album was a 12-inch disc, but it was recorded at 45 rpm. It was briefly available via mail order from a few soundtrack specialists. Reportedly, the inclusion of John Williams' "Ladd Company Logo" may have prevented a wider release. The LP rapidly went out of print, subsequently receiving valuations above \$100 by record dealers.

In 1989, the recording was reissued by original producer John Lasher in the compact disc format, limited to 2,000 copies. The CD, pressed by Lasher's Soundtrack Collector's Special Editions label in Australia, appeared in selected retail stores, but it quickly sold out, and, as with the LP, became an in-demand collector's item.

Happily for soundtrack enthusiasts, Varese Sarabande determined to rectify the lack of availability by adding the title to their estimable series of recordings of classic film music conducted by Joel McNeely. McNeely, a composer in his own right, had previously achieved great success with the label's new renditions of scores written by Bernard Herrmann, among others. McNeely,

conducting the London Symphony Orchestra, performed Barry's score in the venerable Abbey Road Studios in April of 1998. The resulting CD made its debut in retail stores three months later. John Barry's neoteric noir stylings were finally accessible to the general public for the first time.

McNeely's execution boasts superlative attention to the material. The Varese edition deletes the unnecessary "Ladd Company Logo," substituting nearly four minutes of music not present in the Lasher releases. The expansion includes the cues "Ned," "Matty's Place," and "I'm Burning Up." Several of the other cues common to both Lasher's and Varese's pressings are presented in revised order on the new CD, without accompanying explanation. (Also, the volume level of the CD is lower than that of the preceding Lasher disc.)

This new release is cause for celebration, as *BODY HEAT* contains one of the finest film scores of the past two decades. McNeely's reading successfully distills the subtle nuances of Barry's musical character shadings.

The tempo of McNeely's conducting pleasurably takes its own sweet time to unfold. A couple of recent noir/music compilations included the theme from *BODY HEAT*, but those renditions needlessly jazzed it up. McNeely's performance of the score restores its "cooler" jazz impressions and deliberate pace. The new release offers a sensuous listening experience, even for those who haven't viewed the film. The music captivatingly smolders and swells. Although the Varese CD still seems a bit brief at approximately 36 minutes, the major thematic elements and character motivations of *BODY HEAT* have been preserved in gratifying fashion. Varese Sarabande is the soundtrack enthusiast's best friend.

—John F. Black



Hot stuff: Kathleen Turner made her movie debut opposite William Hurt in *BODY HEAT* (1981).

BODY HEAT

CREATURES IN YOUR CABLE BOX HALLOWEEN HORRORS ON AMC

This Halloween will be magnificently monstrous for movie fans who get American Movie Classics on their local cable TV system. AMC is presenting MONSTERFEST: HOUSE OF HORRORS, a creepy collection of fright films and specials, from Monday, October 26 through Sunday, November 1.

Favorite fear flicks of the baby boomer generation are included in AMC's 25-film lineup, which spotlights several selections from Hammer Films and from producers Roger Corman and William Castle. Tim Burton, director of the modern macabre hits BEETLE JUICE (1988) and THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS (1993), will act as AMC's very own horror host, introducing many of the films "live" (hopefully) from some of America's most infamous haunted houses.

Starting Monday of Hallow-week, the festival presents one frightening feature every weeknight at 10 PM Eastern Time, leading up to a 43-hour marathon stretching from Friday night to Sunday afternoon. In addition to the 25 feature films, a newly produced one-hour special entitled HOLLYWOOD GHOST STORIES will premiere. MONSTERMANIA, the movie channel's original 1997 documentary, will also have encore showings.

Burton kicks off the creepshow on Monday night by introducing Bela Lugosi's 1943 fang-filled feature RETURN OF THE VAMPIRE. Tuesday, AMC's MONSTERMANIA special, hosted by former Dracula Jack Palance, celebrates our infatuation with monsters, from turn of the century Gothic literature to *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. Following the special, William Castle's 1960 haunted house gimmick-fest 13 GHOSTS will be shown.

Hammer's atmospheric 1964 Victorian-era chiller THE CURSE OF THE MUMMY'S TOMB shambles your way on Wednesday night, followed on Thursday by yet another curse—director Jacques Tourneur's 1958 occult classic CURSE OF THE DEMON, with Dana Andrews getting a bad case of the runes.

Burton kicks off the weekend-long monstrous marathon Friday night at 9 PM by introducing the premiere of AMC's original production HOLLYWOOD GHOST STORIES. True-life tales of haunted happenings in Tinseltown are profiled in this hour-long production. THEM! (1954), surely the best-ever big bug movie, follows at 10. Then you can cower into the wee hours with the Corman/Price/Lovecraft chiller THE HAUNTED PALACE (1963), the lumbering London-based gargantuas KONGA and GORG (both 1961), and producer Val Lewton's signature shocker CAT PEOPLE (1942).

At 7 AM Halloween morning, horror's big day begins with small screams generated by the ultimate shrink, DR. CYCLOPS (1940), and THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN (1957). Later, AMC delivers "Uncle" Vinnie Price in THE OB-

LONG BOX (1969) and presents Hammer Films' lizard and loincloth epic WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH (1970). At 6:15, Roger Corman's Edgar Allan Poe trilogy TALES OF TERROR (1962, pictured below) brings back Vincent Price, followed by Hammer's DRACULA—PRINCE OF DARKNESS (1966), which was Christopher Lee's second stab at portraying The Count. Another Corman production, X—THE MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES (1963), can be sighted at 10 PM, featuring Ray Milland in a scary tale that festival host Burton has his eyes on as a potential remake project.

As Halloween's witching hour approaches, American International's Lovecraft adaptation DIE, MONSTER, DIE! (1965), starring terror titan Boris Karloff, gets an 11:35 showing, followed by Mario Bava's bewitchingly scary BLACK SUNDAY (1961), featuring horror icon Barbara Steele's most famous performance. THE HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL (1958), William Castle's spooky fave of late-late shows past, materializes at 3 AM, with exotic Hammer monster tale THE REPTILE (1966) creeping along close behind. At 5:40, Mr. Castle plays it for ghoulish laughs with THE OLD DARK HOUSE (1963), a comedy remake owing more to Charles Addams than to James Whale's 1932 classic.

At the crack of dawn Sunday, bloody big bugs terrorize Chicago in THE BEGINNING OF THE END (1957), with Peter Graves battling impossibly huge grasshoppers; the bug attack continues in THE BLACK SCORPION (1957), with Kong's animation king Willis O'Brien overseeing the stop-motion effects. The marathon comes to a close Sunday afternoon with Hammer's mythological monster movie THE GORGON (1964), featuring petrified partners Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee playing good guys for a change.

So fire up the VCR, pull up the Lay-Z-Bones lounge and cook up a cauldron of popcorn as you shiver through AMC's week long Halloween Monsterfest.

—John J. Mathews



Boris & Bela: Back in Bizness!



© 1997 Universal City Studios

Horror stars Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff were teamed for the first time in Universal's *THE BLACK CAT* (1934), directed by cult favorite Edgar G. Ulmer.

A few old fiends will be stalking through the Big Apple this Halloween season, when New York City's Film Forum plays host to the Frankenstein Monster and his blushing Bride, Count Dracula, Im-ho-tep the Mummy, the Wolf Man, the Phantom of the Opera, and a ghastly gaggle of other well-known ghouls. The program of Universal Horrors, which runs from October 30 through November 12, is almost entirely made up of brand new 35mm prints, and promises that every last scar, fang, and electrode will be seen more clearly than they have been in decades—except on the Invisible Man, who won't be seen more clearly than he has been in decades!

Scheduled to be included in the program is *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* (1932), which, due to previous difficulties in obtaining the best available source material, has often been dubbed "the old extremely dark house." Paired with *THE INVISIBLE MAN* (1933), it is one of two

double bills of films directed by James Whale and plays from November 6 through 8. *TITANIC* star Gloria Stuart is the frightened ingenue in both flicks, and she has good reason to be scared, with Boris Karloff, Ernest Thesiger, and Charles Laughton inhabiting the *HOUSE* and Claude Rains hiding beneath the transparent one's facial bandages.

Also raising a few screams: Whale's *FRANKENSTEIN* (1931) and *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1935), *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* (1925), *DRACULA* (1931), *THE MUMMY* (1932), *THE BLACK CAT* (1934), *THE WOLF MAN* (1941), *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN* (1943), and *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN* (1948).

For a complete schedule, call the Film Forum at (212) 727-8110.

—Drew Sullivan

NEWS HOUND

Continued from Page 14

Universal plans to start shooting their feature film *THE SIX BILLION DOLLAR MAN* (inflation's a bitch) in the spring, for a possible summer 2000 release. Actor Richard Anderson is coproducing and may appear as his Oscar Goldman character from the 1973 ABC-TV series. No word yet if *The Bionic Woman*, *The Bionic Dog*, or *Bigfoot* will brighten the proceedings.

Déjà Vu All Over Again

Break out the Chianti and fava beans—Hannibal Lecter will return in an adaptation of author Thomas Harris' soon-to-be-published novel *The Morbidity of the Soul*. A screenplay will be ready in early 1999. Jodie Foster will be back as Special Agent Clarice Starling, and Anthony Hopkins will reprise his role as the peckish serial killer Lecter, who's forever in search of a fast food joint that de-livers.

As if Scooby Doo weren't challenge enough, Mike Myers starts shooting his new shagadelic spy spoof, *AUSTIN POWERS 2: THE WRATH OF KHAN* (New Line), in November. The randy spy will reportedly be paired with a groovy new assistant, Felicity Shagwell. Liz

Hurley, Robert Wagner, and Seth Green are rumored to return as well.

Two new *LIVING DEAD* flicks are being planned—one from zombie monarch George Romero, and another from John Russo, Romero's partner on the 1968 original. Romero is also reportedly planning a *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* television series!

Boob Tube Tidings

Now that the vivacious Terry Farrell has departed *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE*, the reasons to stay tuned to the syndicated TV series are getting fewer and fewer. Farrell's character Jadzia Dax perished rather unceremoniously in last season's finale. In the upcoming (and evidently final) season, the Dax symbiont slug will slither into a new host named Ezri, portrayed by actress Nicole de Boer, late of Sci-Fi Channel's *MIS-SION GENESIS* series.

Dan Curtis may be resurrecting *THE NIGHT STALKER* as a weekly TV series. But in all likelihood the new version won't feature Darren McGavin or the Carl Kolchak character. Frankly, Dan, it sounds like it'll bite.

Johnathon Schaech, one of the faux-Beatles of *THAT THING YOU DO*, stars in the upcoming TNT cable biopic *BE-*

LIEVE: THE HOUDINI STORY. Pen Densham, producer of Showtime's *OUTER LIMITS* revival series, will produce and direct. Mr. Densham will have to work some magic to top the charming 1976 telefilm *THE GREAT HOUDINIS*.

The Sci-Fi Channel has renewed *MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000* for a 10th season. Mike Nelson and the 'bots will return to the Satellite of Love in 13 new episodes starting in the Fall. Also back on Sci-Fi is Lynda Carter as *WONDER WOMAN* in reruns of both the CBS and ABC series of the seventies. Watch Carter (whose spangled bustier helped many a young male—and female—through puberty) strut her stuff weekdays at 3:00pm Eastern Time.

The Home Video Vault

Don your catsuit, rev up the Lotus, and head to your local video store. A&E Home Video has released episodes of the kinky cult U.K. television series *THE AVENGERS*—digitally remastered from the original film negatives. (Rescued from the Vaults at Mithering, no doubt.) Patrick Macnee and Diana Rigg star as John Steed and Emma Peel, who battle diabolical masterminds in a selection of shows from the series' 1967 season—the first season broadcast in color. (The



Louis Feuillade's **LES VAMPIRES** (1915), the classic 10-part, seven hour silent serial about a gang of brilliant and bloodthirsty thieves led by the indomitable Irma Vep (an anagram of vampire), has just been released on video by Water Bearer Films.

Hound hopes that shows from the superior '65 black-and-white season will soon follow.) Six tapes are available—two episodes per tape—at \$12.95 each; two boxed sets of three tapes each can be purchased for \$29.95 per set.

The Hound likes nothing better than a heartwarming family flick, and Water Bearer Films has come up with a fine, fang-filled example in **DRACULA: FATHER AND SON**, starring who else but that Vamp for All Seasons, Christopher Lee. The plot has the Count battling for son (Bernard Menez) for the love of a beautiful, tasty female morsel, played by **LAST TANGO IN PARIS'** Catherine Breillat. **DRACULA: FATHER AND SON** was directed by Edouard Molinaro of **LA CAGE AUX FOLLES** fame.

Feral femmes highlight four new releases in Universal's Classic Horror Collection. Evelyn Ankers and Acquafredda star in **JUNGLE WOMAN** (1944), reprising their roles from the 1943 jungle meller **CAPTIVE WILD WOMAN**. Vicky Lane takes over the chimp chick role in the last entry of the hairy trilogy, **JUNGLE CAPTIVE** (1945). Lassie's future mom June Lockhart is dogged by a furry family curse in **SHE-WOLF OF LONDON** (1946). Rounding out the

quartet is the 1941 comedy/mystery **THE BLACK CAT**, starring Basil Rathbone, Bela Lugosi, Hugh Herbert, Broderick Crawford, Gale Sondergaard, Gladys Cooper, and, in an early role, Alan Ladd. All four fright films are brand new to video and will set you back \$14.98 each.

Raymond Chandler's classic gumshoe Phillip Marlowe found a perfect latter-day incarnation in Robert Mitchum. Mitchum's two Chandler adaptations from the 1970s—**FAREWELL MY LOVELY** and **THE BIG SLEEP**—have been reissued by Live Home Entertainment at \$14.98 each . . . Universal has reprised four of its horror/sci-fi titles—**FIRESTARTER**, **THE LEGACY**, **ARMY OF DARKNESS**, and **MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000**—at \$9.98 each for a limited time. Also on sale is Spielberg's **THE LOST WORLD** at \$14.98 for the standard edition and \$19.98 for the letterboxed THX version.

Fox Home Video premieres two drive-in faves: **THE LOST WORLD** (1960) and **THE ALLIGATOR PEOPLE** (1959). Fox has also reissued sci-fi classics **THE FLY** (1958) and **THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL** (1951). They're available at \$14.98 each . . . Recent releases on the

rental racks include the thrillers **DEEP RISING** (Hollywood), **HUSH** (Columbia/TriStar), and **NIGHTWATCH** (Dimension) . . . Now available on laserdisc are letterboxed editions of **THE ILLUSTRATED MAN** (Warner), **JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH** (Fox, 1959), the unrated version of Romero's **DAY OF THE DEAD** (Elite), and a special edition of John Carpenter's **THE THING**, which includes commentary from Carpenter and the film's star, Kurt Russell, plus a new 80-minute behind-the-scenes documentary.

Fearsome Flotsam

"May I take your order . . . or your head?" That's what you may hear from the waitstaff at the Classic Monsters Cafe, now open for business at Universal Studios in Orlando, Florida. This spoof of chains like the Hard Rock Cafe is a real restaurant, with the menu and decor themed to Dracula, Frankenstein's Monster, The Creature from the Black Lagoon, and the like. Posters and props from classic horror films adorn the horrific halls of the eatery. Connecticut artist and makeup expert Cortlandt Hull—grand-nephew of **WEREWOLF OF LONDON's** Henry Hull—has created a six-foot replica of Lon Chaney Jr. as Wolf Man Larry Talbot for the establishment. Bone appetit!

Fans of film-music demigod Jerry Goldsmith (**THE OMEN**, **PLANET OF THE APES**, etc.) will have the rare opportunity to see the maestro conduct a program of his classic scores at New York's Carnegie Hall. The concert is tentatively scheduled for Sunday afternoon, October 4. Call 212-247-7800 for information and ticket purchase. But please don't ask them how to get to Carnegie Hall.

Gone, but never to be forgotten: director/choreographer Jerome Robbins; TV hosts Shari Lewis, Bob McAllister, and Buffalo Bob Smith; writer/director Gene Fowler Jr.; screenwriter Wolf Mankowitz; and actors E.G. Marshall, Robert Young, Kay Thompson, Binnie Barnes, Thomas D'Andrea, Douglas Fowley, Eva Bartok, Dorothy Stickney, John Derek, Hugh Reilly, Josephine Hutchinson, Roy Rogers, and—forever Tarzan's sweet Jane—Maureen O'Sullivan.

Send The Hound your questions, comments and (naturally) compliments at TheNewsHound@yahoo.com.



Coming Up Soon in Scarlet Street:
Coleen Gray, NIGHTMARE ALLEY, NIAGARA, David Manners,
Hurd Hatfield, THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY, Marie
Windsor, Shane Briant, Alfred Hitchcock, DEATH TAKES A
HOLIDAY, Film Noir Part Two, Roger Corman, and much more!

Crimson Chronicles

by Forrest J Ackerman



Dead Letter Day. It is with great sorrow that I report that Prince Sirki (Death Incarnate in the classic genre film *DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY*)—Prince Sirki has taken not one but three of our favorite heroines:

Tarzan Johnny Weissmuller's Jane.

LN-18, the numeral-named young sweetheart of 50 years in the future in *JUST IMAGINE*.

And Lorraine Lavond, daughter of living puppets-maker Lionel Barrymore in the cinemadaptation of A. Merritt's famous novel *Burn Witch Burn!*, *DEVIL DOLL*:

Maureen O'Sullivan gave up the ghost at 87. (Wow! I'll be that age in five years. But I'm not ready for Prince Sirki yet!)

Before she passed away, in her middle age Maureen made a sci-fi space alien film, *STRANDED*, and a horror picture, *TOO SCARED TO SCREAM*.

She participated in costar Johnny Weissmuller's 70th birthday (his pal Buster—Flash Gordon / Buck Rogers—Crabbe was also at the banquet) and I went to her table and introduced myself and the next thing I knew I was singing the theme song of *JUST IMAGINE* to her. I also sing it—if it's included in the final cut—in a forthcoming two-hour Cinemax special called *MY HOLLYWOOD: THE FORREST ACKERMAN STORY*. In a newspaper obit about the legendary Irish lass, it was reported that she contemplated playing Jane for the seventh time with Johnny but demurred because her son said he would be embarrassed to see his mother in a jungle with an ape! Bah! Humbug! Kid, you gypped jillions of us!

The Ackermansion is really turning into a museum: Rockstar Ogre (Skinny Puppy) and his wife Jessika and my pal Joe Moe have gone to work and converted one room into a Lon Chaney Memorial Room, dominated by loads of posters, lobby cards, and fotos of the Man of a Thousand Faces, and his beaver hat and ghoulish teeth

from lost *LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT*, and a framed newspaper account of his death. Then they went to work and converted a Guest Room into a joint Karloff and Lugosi Memorial Room with a framed foto of Boris as Im-ho-tep with a piece of the gauze that wrapped him, a fabulous Frankenstein head by Cine Art, a Lugosi still from *MURDERS IN THE*

wearing a white tuxedo tie he owned—with a speck of blood on it!!! I don't know whether it's his or mine as I wore it myself several times after shaving. If they ever use the DNA to make a clone, maybe they'll get an Ackergugosi!

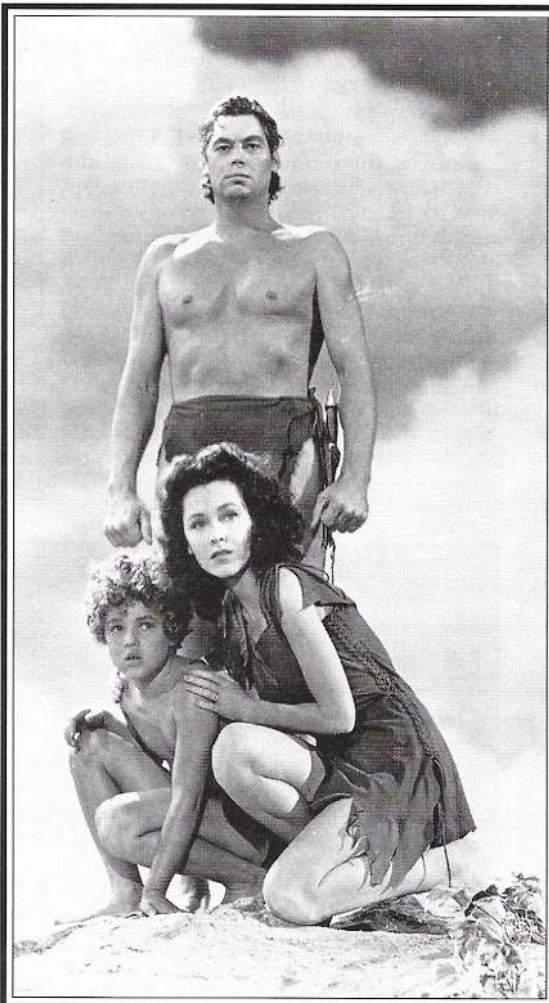
Fifty years ago I cocreated the first Westercon. A couple months ago, I was a Guest of Honor at its 50th anniversary.

Fantasy folks were in evidence, such as Eric Caidin, actress Raven (watch for her in the cinemadaptation of Richard Matheson's book *What Dreams May Come*), author Larry Niven, and GOH Catherine Kurtz all the way from the Emerald Isle. Next year Spokaneites in Washington will see me at their Westercon and in 2000 I'll be getting lei'ed in the Conolulu of Hawaii. In the meantime, I'm off to Dragoncon in Sept. in Atlanta, Reznhd Fair in Chicago (Sept. 11-14), ConCept in Montreal (Oct. 2-4), a vampire affair at the University of Virginia (third week in Oct.), and at Halloween at Chillercon in the territory of the New Jersey Devil. Around Halloween I'll be in a Turner TV special for what Ray Bradbury has characterized as "the wild, the eerie month."

If you're in my neck of the woods, give me a call at 323-MOON FAN and I'll try to give you a tour of the Ackermansion. Forty thousand fans have visited me so far since I opened the doors in 1951. Most recent visitors have been from Belfast Ireland, London, Pittsburgh, the Azores, and Transylvania (two sisters).

During the smash Monster Bash I did my 54th movie cameo, for *MONSTER INVASION*. I'll soon be seen in *OPEN SEASON*. Ion Hobana, Mr. Science Fiction of Romania, reports that he saw me get my head blown off in *CEREMONY* in Bucharest! I haven't even seen myself here in Horrorwood!

Flash! Her original publisher, James Warren, tells me he's bringing back Vampirella under his own aegis! Ack has reserved a roundtrip ticket to Drakulon. Meanwhile, look for me on Scarlet Street!



Maureen O'Sullivan—Forever Jane

RUE MORGUE signed Dr. Mirakle, a life mask of Bela, and a display bust of him

READ UNCLE FORRY IN EVERY ISSUE OF SCARLET STREET!

SCREEN...



and Screen AGAIN!



Scarlet Street's Laser Review

GORG0

The Roan Group
Two Sides CLV
\$49.95

Every time I rewatch GORG0 I'm surprised that it's in color. I don't know why I always remember the film as being in black and white. Maybe it's that much of it takes place at night. Maybe it's that it is fairly unusual for a film of this genre and period to have been made in color. Maybe it's for the same reason that I can never remember my sister's birthday.

GORG0 is a good old-fashioned, guy-in-a-rubber-suit, rampaging monster movie. This time the monster in question gets to rampage through London rather than Tokyo. Gorgo himself is a silly-looking 65-foot-tall bipedal dinosaur who is awakened by an undersea volcano and, cranky, terrorizes an Irish fishing village. He is captured by the usual money-hungry treasure seekers and sold to the usual money-hungry promoter for a London circus, while the usual long-suffering scientists warn everyone that they shouldn't do that.

The giant monster, with his flapping, hinged jaw and red light-bulb eyes, is only slightly less convincing than Godzilla. What makes GORG0 special is the clever plot twist, which I will now reveal, so cover your ears and say "la la loo" while you continue to read: once Gorgo is penned and put on display, and we're all waiting for him to break out and rampage like Kong as per genre tradition... it doesn't happen. Instead, his 250-foot-tall mommy comes after him! And is she ever pissed!

The film gets sillier after Mom shows up; I could never figure out why the Royal Navy suddenly charges out and starts shooting at her. Granted, she is a giant monster, so I suppose that's the

right thing to do. But aside from stomping on the rather annoying fishing village from the opening of the film, she really hadn't done anything yet except swim. Hardly the kind of thing to warrant having every piece of mismatched stock combat footage they could find hurled at her.

Arriving in London, she walks slowly up the middle of the Thames, not bothering anybody, really, and the only reason she demolishes the Tower Bridge is because the damn soldiers standing on it start shooting at her for no reason. Or maybe they're customs agents. With tanks. From that point on, Mom decides to renovate sections of London and,

okay, now it's time to panic. It's then, toward the end, that the primary building-stomping finally occurs.

The Roan Group laserdisc is presented in a not-very-widescreen ratio of 1.66:1. The jacket notes explain that the disk was mastered from a 35mm Technicolor print and great pains were taken to produce the best possible transfer, including digital scratch removal. This is somewhat surprising, considering the merely average quality, with visible dirt and an occasional brief blizzard of severely scratched frames.

—John E. Payne

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET
A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2:
FREDDY'S REVENGE
A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3:
DREAM WARRIORS

Elite Entertainment

Vol. One: Four Sides CLV/CAV

Vol. Two and Three: Two Sides CLV

\$39.95 each

In 1984, the brief but profitable era of the "mad slasher" film genre was already in its dying days. While a few notable exceptions surfaced (such as MANIAC and MOTHER'S DAY), most of these films were simply derivative, dull excuses to paint the screen with cheap splatter effects and partially-nude female bodies.

One of the seventies' predecessors of the slasher era, Wes Craven, had garnered more than enough hatred for such sadistic excursions as LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT (1972) and THE HILLS HAVE EYES (1978). Little did the bile-spewing critics realize that, within the span of a decade, Craven would give the world one of the most memorable icons in the history of horror: Mr. Freddy Krueger. In a move that catapulted him to fame,



Craven made *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*, one of the most chilling and original horror films of the eighties.

For those of you who may have been vacationing on Jupiter for the last 14 years, the story concerns Freddy Krueger (Robert Englund), a child molester burned to death by a vigilante mob of angry parents. Many years later, Krueger (in ethereal form) has returned to wreak his vengeance on the Elm Street children. The most chilling aspect of his persona is his *modus operandi*, from which there is virtually no protection: he attacks the children in their dreams. Nancy Thompson (Heather Langenkamp) tries to figure out what's happening as, one by one, her friends (including teen hunk Johnny Depp, in his screen debut) are consumed by Freddy's vengeance. She learns the horrible truth about Freddy from her divorced mother and father (Ronee Blakley and John Saxon). Resolving to take matters into her own hands, Nancy prepares to confront Krueger on the dream-plane and destroy him once and for all.



Even considering the weak acting and predictable ending, Craven's film is an essay in intelligent horror-making. The plot is quite epic and heightened in its scope (the notion of children paying for the crimes of their parents harks back to the ancient dramas of Sophocles and Aeschylus). Craven strikes an overt Freudian nerve with imagery and narrative, as well: Krueger's crimes are of a grossly sexual nature aimed at children, they are committed with knives extending from the fingers of a specially-made glove (using the phallus as an instrument of death, such as Kubrick ingeniously did in 1971's *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE*), and the violence he perpetrates occurs during the dream state (in one memorable example, during the sleep following teenage sex). Add to this mixture the surrealist dream substance that fueled the fires of Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, and the result is nothing short of amazing. Simply put, the film holds its own incredibly well, even after 14 years.

The Elite Collector's Edition laserdisc exceeds all expectations, proving why this company has yet to be bested in the care and value that goes into its product. The digital transfer of the film

is letterboxed at 1.85:1, offering a clarity never before seen. The sound has been enhanced using digitally remastered stereo surround, which makes the presentation even more powerful.

The double-disc set features an audio commentary on analog track one by Craven, Langenkamp, John Saxon, and director of photography Jacques Haitkin. Craven keeps the conversation moving along, dropping enough anecdotes along the way to satisfy even the most relentless fan. Of particular interest is his fascinating recounting of the newspaper stories that inspired his idea for the film. The original mono soundtrack is included on analog track two. The first disc is presented in CLV format and concludes with the original trailers for the other installments in the series.

Disc two is the payoff for true collectors. Presented in CAV, it contains deleted scenes, alternate endings, memorabilia, storyboards, production stills, effects shots, even Robert Englund's audio tests for developing Freddy's voice! Craven's battle with the MPAA over the film's violence is also chronicled. For any fan of this first installment, the price is very small indeed for what they will get.

It came as no surprise that the popularity of Craven's film would demand a sequel. But no one expected the atrocity known as *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET TWO: FREDDY'S REVENGE* (1985). Director Jack Sholder merely recycles old material until his end product is achieved: an amateurish piece of work. Here, Freddy is drawn to a teenage boy named Jesse (Mark Patton), whose family has moved into the old Thompson house on Elm Street. Through Jesse, Freddy hopes to slaughter even more kids than he did in the original. Thus, the bare skeleton of the first film becomes the sustenance of this second effort—Freddy kills kids in gory ways. That's it. Wes Craven had absolutely nothing to do with this film, a fact painfully evident from the opening credit sequence involving school kids on a bus driven by . . . guess who?

The only original aspect of the film is one that many fans refuse to even acknowledge. The relationship between Jesse and Freddy is framed with intriguing tones of homosexuality (from Krueger himself and also from Jesse's gym coach, who shows a preference for leather). Compare this to the relationship between Jerry Dandrige and Evil Ed (Chris Sarandon and Stephen Geoffreys, respectively) in *FRIGHT NIGHT* (1985). The implications are not only there, but brought to a physical conclusion when Freddy is reborn (literally) after he enters Jesse. While Freddy's physical contact with his victims in the first film was relegated to violence, the presence he invokes during his first scene with Jesse is menacing in a very sexual way. While it's not my contention that Sholder was attempting to make Freddy Krueger

a gay horror icon, this subtext lends at least some degree of depth to an otherwise worthless film. And in the grand scheme, maybe it's just a coincidence that the name "Freddy Krueger" also contains Freud's name half-hidden as an anagram.

Elite's disc is letterboxed proportionately at 1.85:1 and looks fairly symmetrical. The colors are well-balanced, bringing out the vibrant details in the garish mid-eighties teen fashions. According to the jacket, the sound is digitally sweetened mono, which makes it very muffled in scenes containing a lot of low end. The high end sound sources (Jesse's scream when Freddy reveals his brain, the clinking and grating of the trademark knife blades) are greatly accentuated, but they don't run any risk of exceeding the listener's pain threshold. The solo CLV disc ends with the theatrical trailer for the film, presented full-frame.

Two years after the sequel, Craven moved back to Elm Street to produce and cowrite *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3: DREAM WARRIORS* (1987). The creative and artistic success of the first film has never been so closely emulated as in this third installment, directed by Chuck Russell. The remaining Elm Street Children, all haunted by Freddy in their dreams, have been systematically imprisoned in a mental hospital, where a kindly doctor (Craig Wasson) hopes to save them. Heather Langenkamp reprises her role as Nancy, now fully grown and a dream researcher by trade. With her guidance, the Elm Street children battle Freddy in some of the most original and surreal sequences ever shot for the series. Krueger's persona slightly alters yet again. Like a hellish Willie Wonka, he uses the disabilities



of the Elm Street Children (one is crippled, one is deaf and mute, one is a drug addict) to torment them. Robert Englund was given a well-written role for this one, and he plays Freddy Krueger to sadistic perfection.

The letterboxing here is also 1.85:1, but the real charmer is the image itself. The color balance is practically perfect, adding a plethora of aesthetic to the blue-white-black scheme used in many of the dream sequences. The digitally mastered stereo sound is clear as a bell, and the theatrical trailer closes the presentation.

© New Line Cinema 1985

Unlike his lesser efforts, including the dreadful *DEADLY FRIEND* (1986), *SHOCKER* (1989), *A VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN* (1995), and the overrated and boring *SCREAM* (1996), Wes Craven proved in the first and third installments of *ELM STREET* that his creative genius for telling horror stories is deadly when focused. It's a shame he can't be more consistent from one project to the next. Nonetheless, his talents deserve praise for the originality of ideas, themes, and narrative evidenced in these films (and also fleshed out in 1994's *WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE*). Regardless of the numerous, derivative sequels that have followed in the wake of the original, *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* truly challenges the faction that claims the horror genre is incapable of any original creation.

—Brooke Perry

FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

Warner Bros./Image

Two Sides CLV

\$39.95

Amicus was a British studio that produced films in the Gothic Hammer tradition, often employing many of the same actors and crew members. The company unexpectedly struck gold with its initial anthology offering, *DR. TERROR'S HOUSE OF HORRORS* (1965). Over the next nine years, Amicus would continue their series of omnibus films, including *TORTURE GARDEN* (1967), *THE HOUSE THAT DRIPPED BLOOD* (1970), *TALES FROM THE CRYPT* (1972), *ASYLUM* (1972), *THE VAULT OF HORROR* (1973), and *TALES THAT WITNESS MADNESS* (1973).

FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE (1973) was another of their horror exercises. It was adapted from the novel *The Unbidden* and other short stories by R. Chetwynd-Hayes (whose work also provided the basis for *THE MONSTER CLUB* of 1980). Previous Amicus anthologies had depended on a smorgasbord of Robert Bloch yarns and William Gaines' *E.C. Comics*.

Peter Cushing undertakes the linking role of the crusty Scottish proprietor of a

back-alley antique shop far removed from the glitz of Carnaby Street. Whenever a transaction requires completion, Cushing disappears into another room to prepare the receipt. Depending on such an honor system, he's often victimized by fraud. Various patrons indulge the opportunity for petty cash theft, shoplifting, or price-tag switching. Of course, the avaricious offenders justly receive their comeuppances.

The first story finds David Warner buying a 400-year-old mirror haunted by an evil spirit that influences Warner to murder a series of victims. At one point, the demon intones "Feeeee Me" as though auditioning for a road company production of *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*. The "surprise" ending, in which Warner takes the place of the spirit in the mirror, is so hackneyed that it inspires guffaws rather than chills.

The second tale begins more promisingly. Ian Bannen dispenses Christian charity to a street peddler (Donald Pleasence), perhaps to salve his own conscience for having defrauded Cushing. Bannen is unhappy with his shrewish wife (Diana Dors) and their smart aleck son (John O'Farrell), so he eases into a class-spanning relationship with the peddler and his equally balmy-looking daughter (Angela Pleasence). Faster than you can say "Crudeney Buns!," Bannen finds himself available to marry the daughter, her expertise with a voodoo doll having freed him from his marital obligations. But the nuptials prove equally fatal to him, courtesy of a twist ending that appears to have been shoe-horned from yet another story.

The next segment, "The Elementals," picks up the pace considerably. A chance train encounter between two strangers, an upper-class British twit (Ian Carmichael) and a loopy clairvoyant (Margaret Leighton), reveals that an invisible entity has taken up residence on the gentleman's shoulder. Leighton pays a professional house call to Carmichael and his wife (Nyree Dawn Porter, remembered from the PBS series *THE FORSYTE SAGA*). Leighton liberates Carmichael while simultaneously demolishing his parlor in the process. However, the medium hasn't entirely succeeded in evicting the pest. The elemental in question has simply relocated to the nearest warm host. Although we never actually catch sight of the creature, we can always feel its physical presence, thanks to the fastidious ingenuity of the acting performances. Their craftsmanship yields the most effective portion of the entire film.

The concluding story involves an antique door

that permits the demonic ghost of King Charles 2nd to walk the earth (and unfortunately conjures up the notion that this episode is essentially similar to the antique mirror tale). The royal spectre threatens the lives of purchasers Ian Ogilvy and Lesley-Anne Down. Regrettably, the visible mad monarch is much less credible than the imaginary elemental from the preceding segment. King Charles is also less triumphant in his villainy than the titular pest, thanks to an uncustomarily benevolent denouement regarding Ogilvy's spending habits.

FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE survives as a mediocre installment in Amicus' succession of horror anthologies. Its occasional flashes of humor and shock are too often weighed down by genre clichés. The endings of the first two stories may represent the most inept "surprises" since David L. Hewitt's impoverished, derivatively entitled *DR. TERROR'S GALLERY OF HORRORS* (1967). The second two tales, considered together, are better but perhaps not potent enough to eliminate the aftertaste of the first two. Still, the film does offer the occasional thrill, and plenty of yocks—some intentional.

The Image/Warner laserdisc showcases *FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE* in the best light possible. The print is free of speckles and artifacts. Color values are consistent with recollections of the film's early seventies cycle through drive-ins and smaller urban hardtops. The letterboxing at 1:85-1 displays the modest ambience of the set decorations. The disc has been pressed in CLV, spreading the entertainment across two sides. The well-chosen side break occurs between the second and third stories, preserving the integrity of the respective narratives.

—John F. Black

UNITED ARTISTS HORROR CLASSICS VOLUME 1 MGM/UA Six Sides CLV \$89.95

Image Entertainment's *UNITED ARTISTS HORROR CLASSICS VOL. 1* is a tasty jambalaya concocted with late fifties low-budget genre ingredients. Matters commence with *I BURY THE LIVING* (1958), a suitably macabre drama about a department store president (Richard Boone) who hesitatingly assumes managerial duties of a local cemetery. He is transitionally assisted by the old caretaker (Theodore Bikel, heavily made up), who's about to be retired following 40 years of service.

Boone soon discovers that people mysteriously perish whenever he sticks a black pin into their designated plots, depicted on the office's wall map of the burial grounds. The corpses pile up as he misguidedly attempts to disprove his own hypothesis. Expressionistically, the cemetery map appears to enlarge in tandem with Boone's encroaching be-



© Warner Bros.



lief in his own lethal supernatural power.

Although economically mounted and primarily achieved through conversational means, *I BURY THE LIVING* furnishes genuine chills. This is principally due to the underplaying by Richard Boone. Normally an abrasive actor, Boone portrays the cemetery manager as a pensive, even introspective man who reluctantly pursues his responsibilities. He is utterly credible as an Everyman who's had graveness thrust upon him. Regrettably, the film eventually jettisons its well crafted, harpsichord-tinkled mood by settling for a predictable "surprise" ending.

The box set's established atmosphere of tasteful spookery is maintained by the next offering, *THE RETURN OF DRACULA* (1958). The Count (Francis Lederer) assumes the identity of one of his victims, a Transylvanian artist journeying to live with distant American relatives. He arrives in the small town of Carleton, California. The film's title has telegraphed that the corruption of vampirism will follow in his wake.

Dracula deftly employs his European charm to insinuate himself into the family's good graces. To the teenaged daughter (Norma Eberhardt), he represents Old World sophistication. Her admiration of his apparent gentility causes her to disregard his quirkier personality traits, such as dusk-to-dawn strolls and a distaste for mirrors. Soon enough, the community suspects that an ill wind has blown into town.

THE RETURN OF DRACULA is reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock's *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* (1943), in which a young woman idolized her visiting (murderous) uncle. Lederer's Count is as suave as Joseph Cotten's portrayal of Uncle Charlie in the Hitchcock film. Dracula's verbal threats are always cloaked by superficial pleasantries. The vampire even manages to denounce the conformity of "normal" people, a trait shared with the supercilious uncle.

In the inevitable comparison with Christopher Lee, Francis Lederer doesn't offer Lee's tigerish ferocity. His Dracula is more of a philosophical and urbane creature. While Lee is customarily a seldom-seen menace, Lederer's Count contrastingly enjoys toying with the town's citizens for his own amusement. His victimization of his "cousin" does make him seem more treacherous than Lee, however, and Eberhardt's enactment of a three-dimensional character who fears the loss of her own humanity renders her a more sympathetic victim than is usually found in these pictures.

The penultimate entry, *THE FOUR SKULLS OF JONATHAN DRAKE* (1959), is probably the weakest in the set. The story centers on the Drake family and one of its antecedents, a man who commanded the massacre of a tribe of Jivaro Indians in Ecuador. Thanks to the natives' 180 year-old curse, the skulls of Drake descendants mystically appear in the family vault.

Veteran character actor Henry Daniell portrays an ostensibly Swiss anthropologist whose fascination with shrunken heads betrays another nationality. In fact, the "doctor" has personal experience with the aged skeleton in the Drake family closet. Daniell gives his trademark "haughty aristocrat" portrayal, but appears less energized than usual, befitting the film itself.

Though the subject matter is fertile for terror, director Edward L. Cahn's treatment remains pedestrian. The actors stand around on cramped sets, muttering absurdities. Valerie French's heroine rarely rises above the level of monotone. A couple of times, she resorts to eye-fluttering to convey the emotion lacking in her performance. She's much less animated than the floating skulls that disturb Jonathan Drake's dreams.

Numerous other incongruities are displayed. The curse sequence, in which a Jivaro Indian rhythmically beats a drum, suggests the ambience of a period beatnik java joint. During the climactic confrontation, the villain's knife wobbles furiously, as though made of rubber. One scene inside the Drake house shifts, Ed Wood style, from a light background to a significantly darker one. (Wood often evidenced such confusion, but at least his gaffs occurred in outdoor shots.)

Still, *THE FOUR SKULLS OF JONATHAN DRAKE* provides occasional entertainment. The funereal organ soundtrack adds a sense of old-fashioned melodrama, and the periodic floating craniums are suitably creepy. But aside from these insufficient assets, the picture plays like a minor programmer for numskulls.

The set's final piece, *THE MANSTER* (1959/62), suggests that two skulls provide more fun than four. Peter Dyneley stars as a foreign correspondent/muckraker stationed in Japan. A Japanese mad scientist (Satoshi Nakamura), reeling from disastrous experiments performed

on his wife and brother, discovers this new healthy specimen when the vulgar, uncouth journalist interviews him.

Resembling a bargain basement version of Lon Chaney Jr., Dyneley is just what the doctor ordered. Nakamura's "courtship" of him treats Dyneley to such quaint provincial customs as geisha parties and coed mineral springs bathing. But amid the festive frivolity, the doctor influences the reporter to imbibe plenty of liquid serum camouflaged as whiskey. Dyneley soon observes a Cyclopean eye sprouting on his shoulder! Eventually, the eye grows into another head to be supported by his human bone structure.

The distress causes the tortured journalist to murder several victims. Finally, he splits into two separate beings, himself and a hairy, apelike monster. Dyneley vanquishes his former parasite by knocking it into an active volcano. A peripheral character seizes the opportunity to ponderously pontificate about the good and evil trapped in a man's soul.

THE MANSTER was one of the few American/Japanese coproductions of its era. While never plausible, the narrative crams numerous exploitation elements into its comparatively brief running time. As such, it's an unadulterated romp from beginning to end, perfect for aficionados of camp.

The four titles comprising the *UNITED ARTISTS HORROR CLASSICS VOL. 1* box set have been afforded a consistently effective transfer to laserdisc. The largely unblemished prints display



satisfactory black and white contrasts, though the last two evidence occasional grain. (*THE RETURN OF DRACULA* preserves its one color sequence.) The 1:33-1 aspect ratio doesn't sacrifice any significant imagery from the films. The four titles have been spread over six sides in the CLV format. The side breaks are acceptable, other than a mild chuckle provided when Theodore Bikel admonishes "I can't answer for what happens after sundown." The immediate dissolve to darkness, necessitated by the break, attaches an exclamation point to Bikel's pronouncement. The set's one bonus is a desirable supplement: all four films' music and effects tracks have been isolated on the analog channels.

—John F. Black

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THE SPY WHO LOVED ME

MGM/UA

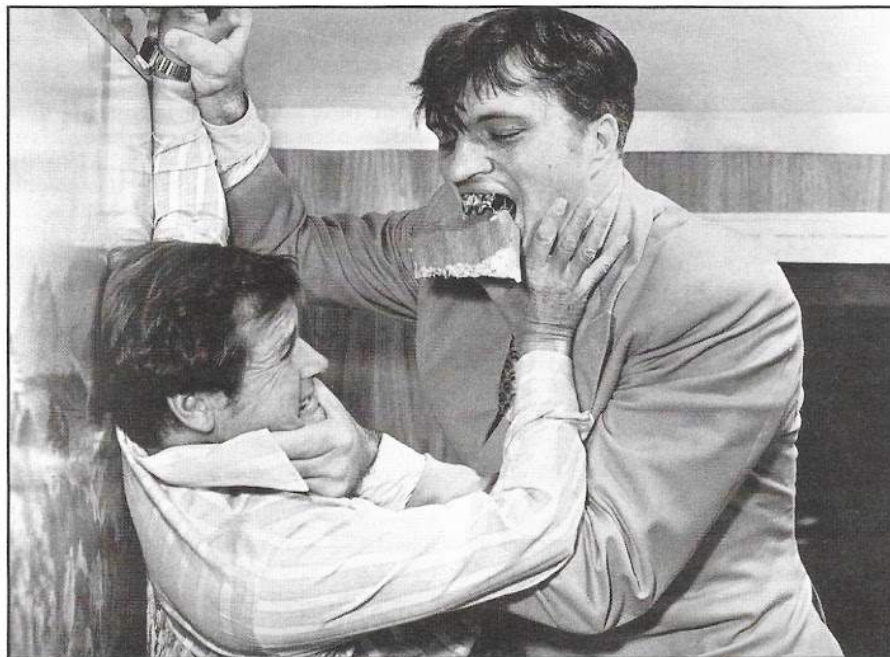
Sides One and Two CLV, Side Two CAV
\$39.95

Most people pick *THE SPY WHO LOVED ME* (1977) as their favorite Roger Moore James Bond film, and I sure can't see any reason to argue. Moore's third outing as Her Majesty's top secret agent borrows a few elements from other of the series' films and mixes a healthy dose of originality, a visually pleasing bit of travelogue, and more than the usual amount of spectacular effects.

When we check in with 007 we find him in imminent danger of having sex with a woman in a ski lodge in Austria, a situation from which he is saved by her producing a small gun (from God knows where). A thrilling ski chase in the Alps follows, and is climaxed with an applause-inducing tongue-in-cheek escape by our resourceful hero.

Bond is assigned to team up with a Russian secret agent to discover how and why two nuclear missile submarines, one British and one Russian, have disappeared from the face of the sea. (Of the original Ian Fleming story there is no sign, and for once that was Fleming's choice. He so disliked that particular short story that he would only sell the rights to the title to producer Broccoli.) The Russian spy, Major Anya Amasova, is played by Barbara Bach in a performance that can best be described as visually dazzling, but then no one goes to a Bond film for deep character performances. At first their relationship is icy and competitive. They distrust one another and continually vie for first grab at clues. But they grow to trust each other eventually and, since they are secret agents, land in bed together as soon as it seems viable. Their investigations lead them through scenic foreign countries, including a marvelous sequence among Egyptian ruins. They are pursued by one of the series' more bizarre bad guys (and that's saying quite a bit), a seven-foot, steel-toothed, indestructible Lurchoid named Jaws (Richard Kiel), who works for the chief suspect, shipping magnate Karl Stromberg (Curt Jurgens, always a perfect villain). Along the way they reprise the train compartment fight scene from *FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE* (1963) with gusto, if not originality. Also on Stromberg's payroll is the most luscious hit-person ever, horror genre favorite Carolyn Munro, who gives Bond a heart-stopping wink before trying to run his car off a cliff with her helicopter.

Bond and Amasova go to sea aboard a U.S. Navy attack sub and, sure enough, they get kidnapped, too. Seems Stromberg owns the world's largest oil supertanker (nicely tying the film in with current events—we were involved in one of the Mideast oil crises at the time), and it can swallow subs whole. This gimmick is lifted directly from the space-capsule kidnappings in *YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE* (1967), as is the basic plot of a megalomaniac trying to start a war for his own ends. But, again, what is lacking in originality is made up for in spectacle.



maniac trying to start a war for his own ends. But, again, what is lacking in originality is made up for in spectacle.

From here on in it's pure action, as Bond and three boatloads of guys in sailor suits break out and have a rousing battle in the cavernous bow section of the tanker (largely finished in polished stainless steel and chrome—Bond villains are sharp decorators), culminating in a satisfying barrage of explosions.

THE SPY WHO LOVED ME features one of the series' best theme songs, "Nobody Does It Better," performed by Carly Simon, and a standout score by, believe it or not, Marvin Hamlisch. For the stunning "hangar" scenes of three, count 'em, three nuclear subs docked inside Stromberg's supertanker, the world's largest soundstage was constructed for a then-astronomical one million bucks. (The same stage would later be transformed into the planet Dagobah for 1980's *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*.)

There are some trivia items in the script for the fans; since the Navy helps out in this adventure, Bond spends much of the film in Royal Navy uniform, one of the rare times his military standing as a naval commander is evoked (while, happily, Bach spends as much time in slinky revealing dresses). And this may be the only film in which Q (Desmond Llewelyn) is referred to by name—Amasova greets him as Major Boothroyd.

The THX laser disk is presented in Dolby digital surround sound and immaculately transferred in 2.35:1 letterbox format. Though there is a theatrical trailer appended to the movie, there are no other special features. Unusually, while most films over two hours recorded in extended play format are made with the final side in CAV, this set gives us side two of the three sides

in CAV mode. Most of the action being on side three, it seems an odd choice.

—John E. Payne

MOONRAKER

MGM/UA

Sides One and Two CLV, Side Three CAV
\$39.95

Arguably the worst of the Roger Moore James Bond films, and almost certainly the silliest, *MOONRAKER* (1979) capitalized heavily on the post-*STAR WARS* feeding frenzy for effects-laden eye candy. The followup to *THE SPY WHO LOVED ME* was originally intended to be *FOR YOUR EYES ONLY* (1981), but Cubby Broccoli knew a bandwagon when he saw one. While Bond has often indulged in sci-fi themes, and once before ventured into orbit (well, not personally), this film pulled out all the stops. Unfortunately, they should have left some of them in . . .

The pre-title sequence includes one of the series' most spectacular action scenes. Pushed out of an airplane without a parachute, Bond "chases" the bad guy who jumped out ahead of him and steals his parachute. Then dentally-enhanced henchman Jaws (Richard Kiel reprising his role from *SPY*) "chases" after Bond. The scene was filmed without special effects by skydiving stuntmen wearing special undersized parachutes hidden beneath their wardrobe. It's a breathtaking stunt, but by the end of it the film's overriding inanity becomes apparent: Jaws, having lost his chute, starts flapping his arms like an idiot, and lands unharmed on a circus tent.

The standard plot involves the usual megalomaniac, one Hugo Drax (Michael Lonsdale), builder of the fleet of Moonraker space shuttles and possibly the single most lifeless villain in the whole

series. (Sadly, the role was turned down by James Mason, whose presence would have improved the whole film.) One of Drax's shuttles is stolen in a flame-drenched (and technically impossible) midair heist off the back of its 747 carrier plane, and Bond's mission is to find out by whom and for what.

Drax, naturally, has a sinister plot, which Bond uncovers as he works his way through a series of attempts on his life and a string of waifish women considerably younger than himself (Lois Chiles, Corinne Clery, et al). Each time Jaws appears the movie turns into a Road Runner cartoon, with Jaws ending up in some sort of impact-oriented incident that would kill anyone but him or Wile E. Coyote. Suspension of disbelief for this film would require extensive drug therapy.

Drax intends to wipe out mankind with an engineered plague, then repopulate the Earth with his own chosen beautiful people—and himself, of course. His modern ark is a private space station, taking the record for the most expensive and implausible bad-guy's hideout of the series. That he manages to keep this huge orbital redoubt undetected when we all know the Air Force is tracking every nut and bolt the astronauts ever lost is covered by the throwaway line, "Hmm. He must have a radar jammer." Indeed. And I must have an embolism; please excuse me.

Bond calls in the Marines, and a shuttle full of space-suited soldiers with laser rifles arrives. As Drax's troops move out to engage them, a space battle erupts and the movie goes totally for broke, with laser beams flashing and chunks of space station blowing up and space-marines dying left and right. It's the typical climactic fight-in-the-bad-guy's lair scene that caps such better Bond films as *YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE* and *THE SPY WHO LOVED ME*, but it looks more like *BATTLESTAR GALACTICA* than Bond. Happily, and perhaps by way of apology, the next Bond film out of the gate was *FOR YOUR EYES ONLY*, arguably the best of Roger Moore's contributions to the Bond series.

Even a bad Bond looks spectacular on laser disk, though, and this presentation is no exception. Letterboxed in 2.35:1 and recorded in Dolby digital surround sound, Sides One and Two are in extended play, while the effects-heavy Side Three is in CAV.

—John E. Payne

MIGHTY JOE YOUNG
Image Entertainment
2 Sides CLV
\$29.95

Ernest B. Schoedsack's 1949 *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG* combines a forties American perception of Africa with a large ape, cowboys, and Hollywood glitz. We open on an African plantation, where a young Jill Young (Lora Lee Michel) buys

a baby gorilla from passing natives. Years go by and we shift to the Hollywood office of feisty Max O'Hara (Robert Armstrong), who is planning a trip to Africa to supply wild animals for his new nightclub's motif. Enter Cowboy Gregg (Ben Johnson), a man with a powerful yearning to visit Africa. In typical showman style, O'Hara "hits" on an idea: cowboys in Africa!

In Africa, in a scene that may have been reverse engineered into *THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK* (1997), O'Hara's crew of ridin' and ropin' cowboys have assembled a collection of caged jungle beasts. Mighty Joe Young arrives, checking out the scene. An attempt is made to lasso the big ape, with almost disastrous results to the lassoees. Enter a now barely grown Jill Young (Terry Moore), who demonstrates a remarkable control over Mighty Joe. A meeting is soon arranged and O'Hara talks Jill into signing a contract that will make her and Joe the star attractions in his new nightclub.

Back in Hollywood, Joe (billed on the marquee as Mr. Joseph Young) proves a sensation. For weeks, he and Jill are subject to O'Hara's vision of sensational acts: Joe in a tug of war against a troop of well-known strong men; Joe rising from beneath the stage floor on an elevated platform, holding a piano-playing Jill over his head . . . all in a jungle setting featuring glass walls housing wild animals. As the weeks pass, Joe becomes sullen, living in a basement cage while Jill's vision of Hollywood glamour has been diluted by a strong dose of reality. Finally, after an organ-grinder act featuring Joe as a cap-wearing monkey, a trio of drunks headed by Nestor Paiva (1954's *CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON* and a host of others) find Joe in his basement cage, get him drunk, and burn his hand with a cigar. Joe finally has had enough. He breaks through the cage and, in one of the film's greatest sequences, runs amok in the nightclub, scattering patrons and jungle beasts alike. Jill and Gregg, with O'Hara providing the distraction, elude the police and spirit Joe away in a truck . . .

Often compared to the incomparable *KING KONG* (1933), *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG* shares some superficial similarities in its use of a gigantic ape, a nightclub act, and Robert Armstrong. Armstrong reprises his Carl Denham character in the guise of Max O'Hara, but his performance seems tired and forced and his character suffers for it. Only in the final scenes does O'Hara seem to have the old energy and charm that made Carl Denham such an appeal-

ing character. There the resemblance ends. *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG* is a very simple story, with none of the psychological and social underpinnings that made *KING KONG* such an astonishing work. The ape itself, on the other hand, is a truly amazing piece of work. Modeled after a real gorilla skeleton, the stop-motion ape created by Willis O'Brien (supervisory) and Ray Harryhausen is amazingly realistic. Pay special attention to the early African scene in which Joe tries to extract a lion from its cage.

The disc, with 26 chapter stops, offers crisp, clean video and audio (mono). The fire sequence is recreated to reflect the original two-negative tinting/toning process of the original film.

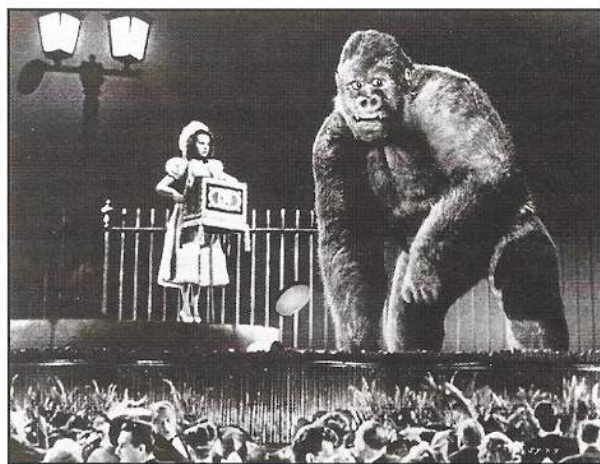
—Michael Spampinato

FOUR SIDED TRIANGLE

The Roan Group
Two Sides CLV
\$49.98

The Roan Group has released a laser-disc transfer of Hammer Films' *FOUR SIDED TRIANGLE* (1953). The film marked the studio's first foray into science fiction. *SPACEWAYS* (also 1953) would follow it into the cinemas a few months later. Arguably, it was also the company's initial flirtation with the Frankenstein legend.

The laserdisc commences with the British Board of Film Censors' Certificate A card. Shortly thereafter, we witness flashbacks that delineate the relationship between three children. Two young boys are both enamored of a blonde female playmate. Several years later, the grown-



up young woman (Barbara Payton) returns to the village and discovers that Bill (Stephen Murray) and Robin (John Van Eyssen, who would later portray Jonathan Harker in 1958's *HORROR OF DRACULA*) have pooled their resources into scientific experiments. The two young men are constructing a machine that can duplicate any object. But Payton's reappearance rekindles their boyhood rivalry, forming the titular triangle. Payton and Van Eyssen soon wed, leaving Murray pining for an identical



wife. As a result, he resolves to up the ante and test the limits of the duplication machine. With Payton's accord, Murray creates a replication of her—an exact replica.

FOUR SIDED TRIANGLE is neither horrific nor suspenseful, but entertains well enough as an offbeat character study. It was directed by Terence Fisher, who additionally coauthored the screenplay. With Fisher at the helm, the technical gobbledegook is soft-pedaled. As the scenarist, he's more intrigued by the ramifications of science on the characters' sensibilities. Their uneasy triangle is further complicated by the creation of Payton's twin. Symbolically, the twin provides the fourth side to their interrelationship. She's an exact duplicate, down to her emotional makeup. To facilitate a dash of climactic mystery, Payton wears identical clothing in her dual role. There's really no other reason for the two twins to dress exactly alike.

American actress Barbara Payton (whose countenance presages Kim Novak's arched eyebrows and Mamie Van Doren's perky platinum waves) enacts the film's love interest(s). She may well have been imported due to her own notorious real-life "triangle." Actors Franchot Tone and Tom (DETOUR) Neal had physically clashed for her attentions, eliciting unseemly tabloid headlines. Payton would later discuss the activities of this "unholy three" in her autobiography *I Am Not Ashamed* (1963). She never commented about the Hammer film in her book, but did describe BRIDE OF THE GORILLA (1951) as her "last big picture break." That's unfortunate, because FOUR SIDED TRIANGLE is an intelligently conceived production. Her dual role certainly has more depth than the white temptress from the jungle pot-boiler. Though not a great actress, Payton contributes some poignancy when the manufactured twin knowingly consents to having her memory erased. She comprehends that she'll necessarily forget the man she loves.

Previously, FOUR SIDED TRIANGLE was only available in mediocre quality on VHS. The Roan Group has utilized a 35mm fine grain print, courtesy of the

British Film Institute. Given the age of the materials, the laserdisc's image is splendid. The picture is crisp, offering pleasing black and white contrasts. Few blemishes of any kind are apparent. The focus and overall resolution are of superior quality. The disc's side break does awkwardly interrupt a resuscitation sequence. The second side follows in the CAV format, but, since the film spotlights few special effects, it might have been preferable to remain in CLV and avoid interrupting the laboratory events. The 1:33-1 aspect ratio displays Fisher's compositions without hint of cropping.

Roan's package is an attractive item for Hammer completists. The jacket cover reproduces the original pulpy poster art, including the arresting subtitles "Unbelievable," "Amazing," "Gripping." In keeping with the film's theme, an exact duplication of the original pressbook is included.

—John F. Black

THE LEGEND OF THE 7 GOLDEN VAMPIRES

The Roan Group
3 Sides CLV
\$69.95

In 1804, Kah (Chan Shen), a Chinese priest, seeks an audience with Count Dracula (John Forbes-Robertson). Tracking the count to his Transylvanian castle, the priest solicits Dracula's aid in reviving seven Szechwan vampires, creatures the priest used to control his village, but who are now lying dormant. Rather than lending his assistance, Dracula replaces the priest's consciousness with his own, travels to the Szechwan village, and begins a reign of terror.

Cut to 1904 Chungking, and Professor Van Helsing (Peter Cushing) recounting the legend of these same seven vamps to a classroom of professors. Halfway through, the professors leave in disdain: such tales are not relevant in this modern age. Discouraged at his reception, Van Helsing plans to return home but is approached by Hsu Tien (David Chiang), whose ancestor was killed seeking to rid his village of the marauding vampires.

Funded by Vanessa Buren (Julie Ege), an expedition to the village is arranged. Hsu Tien and his six brothers (and one sister), all martial arts experts, accompany Van Helsing, his son Leyland (Robin Stewart), and Buren as they trek from Chungking to the Szechuan province. On the way the team is attacked by three of the vampires and several zombies, all controlled by Dracula. The brothers (and one sister) best them in a rather good martial arts battle featuring long sword, short sword, axe, mace, arrow, and fist.

Arriving at the village, Van Helsing and his troop prepare for battle. The re-

maining vampires and a horde of zombies descend on the village, resulting in a well-choreographed martial arts extravaganza and victory for Van Helsing's troop (but at heavy cost)—leading to a final showdown between Van Helsing and Count Dracula.

Often maligned, THE 7 GOLDEN VAMPIRES is a fascinating and surprisingly intelligent experiment in East meets West. A solid foundation in turn-of-the-century English culture, supplied by Van Helsing, gives us a point of reference lacking in most Hong Kong action films. (Pay special attention to the campfire conversation between Van Helsing and Hsu Tien concerning the differences between Chinese and Transylvanian vampires and vampiric lore.)

Though filmed in Hong Kong, this Hammer/Shaw Brothers coproduction retains the lush look and tone that is the Hammer hallmark. Peter Cushing, while definitely aging, looks right at home and retains all the vigor and charisma of his earlier Van Helsing roles.

The 90-minute film is presented in its original 2.35:1 aspect ratio, with mono sound and excellent color and sharpness. A special treat resides on the analog audio tracks: a reading by Cushing of *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires*, written by Don Houghton with music composed by James Bernard. The disc also offers THE 7 BROTHERS MEET DRACULA, the 75-minute re-edit of the original film. Consider it more a curiosity and focus on THE LEGEND OF THE 7 GOLDEN VAMPIRES.

—Michael Spampinato

M
Voyager
Two Sides CLV
\$49.95

An entire city shudders in terror while a clever serial killer preys upon the young and innocent. The police work overtime searching the crime scenes for even the tiniest of clues.

Forensic experts utilize the latest technology to diligently analyze fingerprints while a psychologist deciphers a handwritten note to create a psychological profile of the killer.

Sounds like something straight out of SILENCE OF THE LAMBS, doesn't it? All of these elements are found in the Criterion Collection laserdisc release of Fritz Lang's 1931 psychological suspense drama *M*.

This compelling film was Lang's first film utilizing sound (he'd previously made such silent classics as 1926's METROPOLIS and the Die Nibelungen epic consisting of 1924's SIEGFRIED and KRIEMHILDE'S REVENGE) and would later go on to create such minor masterpieces as THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW (1944) and SCARLET STREET (1945).

Peter Lorre gives a mesmerizing performance as the psychopath who turns the citizens of a city against each other, then ultimately unites them in a desper-

ate search to find the killer in their midst. Many film histories cite *M* as the first movie to examine a serial killer and it's easy to see the influence this classic film has made, even on present day paint-by-numbers slasher movies. If only today's contenders had even a fraction of the grace and skill exhibited in this landmark picture . . .

From the stark moments of silence to the eerie whistling of the serial killer stalking his prey, Lang's artistry is evident throughout. He employs overlapping dialogue with cutaway shots to



fully inform and engage the audience. One brilliant example of this comes when the police are shown having a discussion nearly identical to one being had by the city's criminal leaders, perfectly illustrating the effect the killer has had on the lives of everyone in the city. Lang also displays his genius for sustaining tension by closing in on the killer as he flicks open his knife and peels an apple, while selecting his next victim. The deliberate use of shadow and light, silence and sound, makes for a masterful viewing experience. With all of the killings occurring off-camera but nearly every scene drenched in suspense, Lang clearly displays why he was so well respected by the master himself, Alfred Hitchcock.

Criterion's transfer is sharp, despite the expected wear and tear on the print, and is in the original aspect ratio of 1.33:1. *M* is in German with English subtitles and clocks in at 110 minutes. Liner notes reveal this is a digital transfer

taken from a new 35mm fine grain master and that the audio is from a newly restored digital audio master. Side Two of this CLV disc exhibits a transparent white line along the top border of the image. While there are no supplementary materials, the cover is a fantastically stark red, black, and gray, with concise and informative liner notes. I strongly urge you to add the Criterion Collection's laserdisc release of *M* to your video library.

—Michael D. Walker

SPIDER BABY
Image Entertainment
Two Sides CLV
\$24.99 (Newly Repriced)

The film *SPIDER BABY* was at one time among the rarest of sixties esoterica. It was completed in 1964, and even promoted in *Famous Monsters of Filmland* under the title *CANNIBAL ORGY*. But a lawsuit kept it on the shelf for four years. By the time David Hewitt finally released it, its then-passé black and white status prevented it from being considered a topline attraction. The film sank from sight after a couple of years, apparently lost to the ravages of time.

SPIDER BABY opens with a dapper Quinn Redeker comfortably reclining while garbed in a smoking jacket. He picks up his copy of *Dictionary of Rare and Peculiar Diseases*, automatically locating the entry on the Merrye Syndrome as though he has revisited this path many times. He begins to read aloud, conveying the aura of a fractured fairy tale.

We the audience are thus drawn into the story as outsiders. We identify with a messenger (Mantan Moreland) who trepidatiously enters the forbidding Merrye estate. And we are shocked when this gently humorous character is butchered by a bizarre young woman (Jill Banner).

Lon Chaney Jr. then appears as Bruno, the Merrye family guardian/chauffeur. His sincere devotion to the remaining family members gradually influences us to accept them on their own terms. By the time distant relatives have arrived to take possession of the estate, our sympathies have shifted to the Merrye progeny. Writer/director Jack Hill has managed to suspend disbelief by utilizing Chaney as a dedicated advocate who only seeks to prevent encroachment from the outside world of normalcy.

Following a climactic night of horrors, the narrative returns to storyteller/survivor Quinn Redeker. He smugly expostulates that the Merrye curse was extinguished on that fateful night—but he's clearly not supervising his own daughter carefully enough!

The Image laserdisc offers a deluxe presentation of *SPIDER BABY*. The image is matted in the director's preferred aspect ratio of 1:66-1. The source print itself is noticeably lighter than unauthorized videocassette versions. Many of the props, such as Mantan Moreland's

severed ear, are more clearly visible than ever before. Subtle lighting contrasts within the mansion are well displayed.

The laserdisc also provides a second-audio commentary track, isolated on the analog channels. Creator Jack Hill commences by tracing the film's roots to a couple of UCLA theater department men. They had earned some money in sideline real estate development and desired to invest the profits in a horror movie. They had rejected the scripts being submitted, until Hill's *CANNIBAL ORGY—OR, THE MADDEST STORY EVER TOLD* landed on their desk.

With a raconteur's delight, Hill serves up tasty anecdotes of helming such a low-budget production. Among many issues, he discusses the advantage of knowing where to find a soundstage containing an actual pit, the risk he took in employing then-17-year-old Jill Banner as a minor without the requisite attendance of a tutor on the set, and his creation of body-piercing sound effects by forcefully ripping adhesive tape from film canisters.

Hill entertains the listener with admissions of technical errors, but he also addresses the camaraderie he was able to inspire among his cast members. Though working for scale, they felt honored to be contributing to such a novel project.

Hill speaks movingly about the ailing Lon Chaney Jr.'s contribution to the proceedings. Although plagued by alcoholism, Chaney literally willed himself to remain sober during the week of filming (only allowing himself a daily glass of beer at three in the afternoon). That dedication resulted in a performance that runs the gamut from subtle humor to genuine pathos. Bruno's sincerity may be misguided, but Chaney's portrayal of him helps to "humanize" the oddball Merrye children.

Jack Hill's bemused reactions to the "cult classic" label applied to *SPIDER BABY* betray a humble and gentlemanly approach to his own career. His solo audio commentary is much more successful than his session for the Criterion edition of his *SWITCHBLADE SISTERS* (a session marred by Quentin Tarantino's nonstop barrage of inanities). Hill is in command here, and we're better served by that.

The laserdisc concludes with highlights of the film's 30th Anniversary Revival Premiere, held at Los Angeles' Nuart Theatre. Former Rhino Video procurer Johnny Legend hosts on-camera interviews with Hill; cast members Sid Haig, Beverly Washburn, and Mary Mitchell; cameraman Al Taylor; and longtime Hill associate John Prizer. For some of these participants, this *SPIDER BABY* screening represented their first-ever opportunity to see the finished product.

The Revival Premiere segment is followed by the inscription "Dedicated to Lon and Mantan." It would have been

Continued on page 74

Monster Maker Clive Barker

It's a good thing Clive Barker is an acknowledged master of fantasy, because he must somehow have convinced himself that there are far more than 24 hours in a day. That's the only explanation when one considers the many balls he juggles daily, including those labeled novelist, screenwriter, playwright, film director, artist, and party guest—the latter being his function when I first met him several years ago, at Planet Hollywood in Atlantic City. Barker was there to promote the video release of his *LORD OF ILLUSIONS* (1995), and, after being introduced, I was pleased to learn that he was quite familiar with *Scarlet Street*. (The man even finds time to read!)

Clive Barker was born in Liverpool in 1952. Twenty-one years later, after attending Liverpool University (during which time he made the short films *SALOME* and *THE FORBIDDEN*), he moved to London and became heavily involved in the radical theater of the period, writing plays, directing, and acting.

Late in the seventies, Barker turned to writing short fiction. The initial result was three volumes of *The Books of Blood*, which established his reputation in the horror field. His first novel, *Damnation Game* (1985), soon followed, and was followed in turn by three more *Books of Blood* (published in the States as 1985's *The Inhuman Condition*, 1986's *In the Flesh*, and 1989's *Cabal*).

The eighties saw the first film adaptations of his work: *RAWHEAD REX* and *TRANSMUTATIONS*. Barker hated both, which sparked his decision to enter the field of filmmaking. The result this time, based on his novella *The Hellbound Heart*, was the immensely popular *HELLRAISER* (1987). Two sequels followed—plus comic books, model kits, T-shirts, and everything but the kitchen sink.

More novels followed, including *Weaveworld* (1987) and *The Great and Secret Show* (1989), as did such fright flicks as 1992's *CANDYMAN* (adapted from Barker's story *The Forbidden*) and its sequel 1995 *CANDYMAN: FAREWELL TO THE FLESH*, which first united Barker with director Bill Condon.

It was Condon whom Barker, as executive producer, chose to direct: *GODS AND MONSTERS*, the film version of Christopher Bram's "imaginary biography" of James Whale, *Father of Frankenstein*, and it was this film that prompted me to contact Barker for a *Scarlet Street* interview. That all three film directors connected with this fascinating project—Clive Barker, Bill Condon, and (as subject matter) the late James Whale—were gay was our conversational opener . . .

interviewed by
**Kevin G.
Shinnick**

Scarlet Street: What has been the reaction to your coming out publicly as gay?

Clive Barker: It's been a stunning, silent thing, actually. Total indifference. (Laughs) No, there's really been excellent response from my readers, in the sense that anybody who is familiar with my work has probably made this discovery for themselves, anyway. I've done signings in gay bookstores for the last several years. I've done interviews in *The Advocate*. It's never really been an issue. It's not like I've ever said anything about it other than, "Sure!" Anybody'd ask me the question, I'd give them the answer. What happened last year was that I did an *Advocate* interview and a genre interview all at once, and I think the collective impression was more noteworthy than just doing these pieces bit by bit—to the extent that it's become of interest to my readers. They say, "Cool." Gay readers are very pleased. It reinforces the sense that somebody in the mainstream of fiction and filmmaking is comfortable with saying, "Yes, sure, I'm gay."

SS: That you're comfortable with who you are.

CB: Yes, exactly. And comfortable with putting gay characters, male and female, in the center of my narratives. My recent novel, *Sacrament*, has a gay hero.

SS: Is it easier being an opening gay writer than it would be being an openly gay actor?

CB: Oh, for sure! I'm not pro-outing; I don't think you should be prescribing for other people's lives. I just don't think that's a legitimate or honorable position. I think if you're an actor who makes his money—or, indeed, her money—and pays the mortgage by presenting a certain kind of image to an increasingly conservative audience, then it's certainly the case that the audience is going to have more problems with you being gay. I don't think there's any question about this. The audience is going to have more problems believing that actor as a heterosexual lover if they know that he and his boyfriend were together at the Academy Awards.

SS: Isn't educating the public important?

CB: Oh, yes, I do, but I think we're a long way off from breaking that problem down—and I think in the meantime you can't spoil people's careers. It's just not what you should be up to, you know?

SS: Do you find the current political climate frightening?

CB: Well, sure, but I think you have to compare it with the Thatcher years in England and the Reagan years here. I don't think the last 20 years have been particularly encouraging.

SS: In addition to writing, you're also a filmmaker. In fact, you're a gay director who has executive-produced a film about James Whale, who was a gay director. How did you first become aware of Christopher Bram's book, *Father of Frankenstein*?

CB: It was sent to me, I think by his editor. I read it and was quoted on it and we

decided to make the movie. Bill Condon, who directed *CANDYMAN: FAREWELL TO THE FLESH*, wrote a really stylish, intelligent adaptation of Chris' book.

SS: What was it that attracted you to the subject matter?

CB: Well, of course, it's the story of a gay Brit who makes horror movies. (Laughs) So there's that!

SS: You identified with Whale.

CB: Yes, to some extent. Here was a man who reinvented himself, in a way. Here was a man with a working-class history who turned himself, for a period of time, into Hollywood nobility. He was there at the heart of Hollywood during one of its most glamorous periods and seems to



The popular *HELLRAISER* films (and the character of Pinhead) have made Clive Barker a household name

have been, as far as we can understand, pretty out about his life—though I think he ended up paying a price for that.

SS: You're an admirer of Whale's films?

CB: Yes, of course. *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* is, for me, the greatest horror movie ever made. He imported a lot of European technique into American filmmaking and made it work in a way which remains extraordinary. *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* is still an extraordinary movie. And *OLD DARK HOUSE*, *SHOW BOAT*—this was a talented man. Say *SHOW BOAT* and most people don't think James Whale, but he made it.

SS: It would be much the same if you did *SHOW BOAT*.

CB: Well, Hitchcock had that wonderful line: he said he'd always wanted to do a musical, but he knew the entire audience would be waiting to see which of the chorus girls dropped dead.

SS: Are you hemmed in by the horror label?

CB: No, not really. In books, absolutely not. In film, certainly my history of

making films in a particular genre, films that have made money, means that if I were to go in and say I'd really like to do—well, a musical—yes, I think that would be more problematical. But in books—in the last 10 years I've written fantasies and children's books, mystical fiction, and all kinds of other stuff. Actually, those books outsell the horror books three or four to one, so that's never really been a problem.

SS: How closely does the film *GODS AND MONSTERS* adhere to Christopher Bram's *Father of Frankenstein*?

CB: Closely enough. Bill went off in his own direction, but it's quite respectful of Chris' work.

SS: Was it very difficult getting a project about a gay Hollywood director off the ground?

CB: It has not been the easy journey. Unfortunately, the failure of *ED WOOD* commercially did us a lot of harm. It was a fun movie, but it didn't do its business. So over and over again we went to people with this project and they'd say, "Oh, it's *ED WOOD*!" And we would say, "No, no, no, it isn't *ED WOOD*. *ED WOOD* is wonderful, but this is not *ED WOOD*." That was definitely a problem.

SS: How did you get Sir Ian McKellen to play Whale?

CB: Well, we had a few meetings with Ian and he was simply invited to join the party.

SS: What other actors were considered?

CB: Well, I think Peter O'Toole has a Whale in him. (Laughs) Of course, there are other interesting characters, such as the producer David Lewis, who was Whale's lover for a number of years, George Cukor, Princess Margaret—the usual suspects from that period. The interesting challenge, and it's one that was faced by and dealt admirably with by Tim Burton when he did *ED WOOD*, was not getting into impersonations, but actually trying to recreate the flavor of a period or the flavor of a person. Doing it creatively without getting locked into an impersonation. Plainly, Johnny Depp was a good deal more attractive than Ed Wood ever was in real life . . .

SS: Certainly a hard part to cast in *GODS AND MONSTERS* was Boris Karloff.

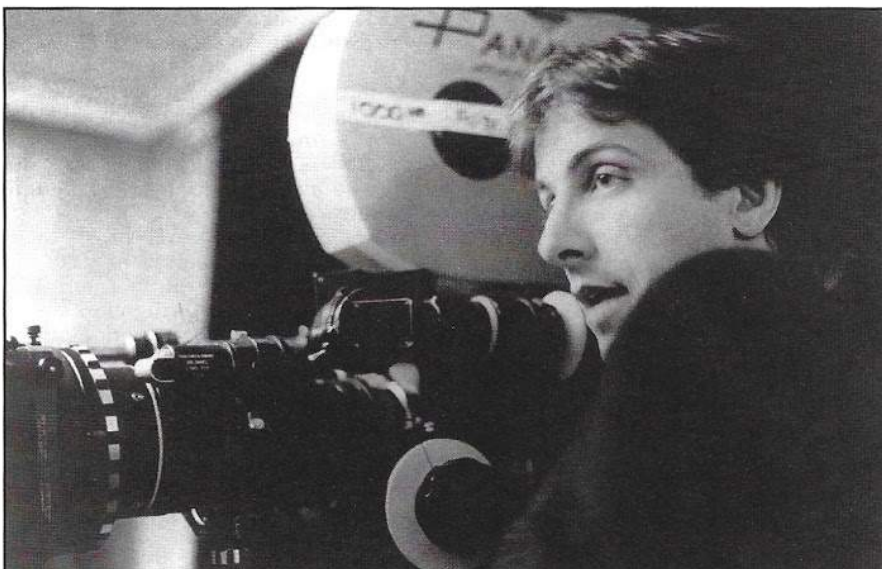
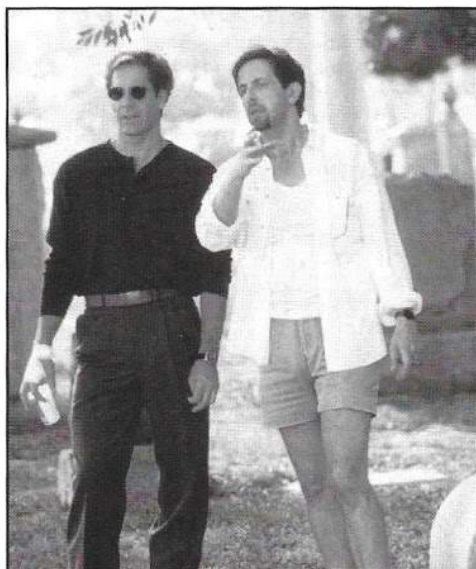
CB: That's perfectly right. That was a tough one.

SS: How about the problem of showing these people in both the thirties and fifties? Did you use different actors?

CB: No, we went for makeup; I think that was the best thing to do. You become misleading otherwise, two sets of actors impersonating the same character risks becoming confusing.

SS: One of the book's highlights is an extended flashback to the set of *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*.

CB: We re-created that. Bill was very keen on doing that. We had to go to Universal for that, obviously. Bill was as detailed and as respectful of the period as possible.



LEFT: Director/screenwriter Clive Barker sets up a scene with star Scott Bakula for *LORD OF ILLUSIONS* (1995). **RIGHT:** Barker behind the camera.

SS: Bill Condon was such an excellent choice for director.

CB: He's wonderful, quite wonderful.

SS: James Whale was a master of subtle horror, whereas you're a master of modern, graphic horror. Do you think modern horror sometimes goes too far?

CB: No. I think Whale was pushing very hard at the limits of what he could get away with even back in the thirties. I don't know what "too far" is, really. There are places where it makes great sense to push the limits of taste and decency, and there are other places where it's good to be reserved. I've certainly done a little bit of both in my career, both on the page and on the screen. I think it's really a question of, "Well, what are you trying to do with the scene?" Are you trying to shock people? Disturb people? Unnerve people? Or are you trying to goose people? What are you attempting? Each scene, each moment in the drama will require something different in the way of technique.

SS: What recent horror films appeal to you?

CB: I haven't seen a lot of horror movies I've liked recently. I admired what Bill did in the *CANDYMAN* sequel a lot, as I said. I admired *FROM DUSK TO DAWN* for its sense of fun and its sheer verve, but it wasn't a particularly scary movie. *MUTE WITNESS*, I thought, was rather fine. There haven't been a lot of horror movies lately . . .

SS: Again, it seems to be the climate. People are blaming real-life violence on films.

CB: Well, as far as England is concerned, we're talking about a country that still bans *THE EXORCIST*!

SS: Here in America, we now have the NC-17 rating, but people are afraid of advertising it.

CB: Well, it's not that they're afraid of advertising. It's that there's a system that simply refuses to advertise. You're looking at a country where certain newspapers and radio stations simply won't carry any ads for NC-17 films. There's a religious thing going on, obviously. The Christian Right is vocal and

getting more vocal. It's an issue here. That isn't to say that we should be scared off by these people. I'm not about to say that screen violence is great, rah rah! I'm simply saying that, in certain contexts, violence has its place in the telling of a story.

SS: Did you feel that you were compromising by coming out with an "R" rating on *LORD OF ILLUSIONS*?

CB: No, because I knew that I could have my unrated version later.

SS: You actually began your career in the theater, as a writer and director. What were your early influences?

CB: Well, that was England in the seventies. The Royal Court was at its height. There was a certain kind of aggressive, in-your-face kind of theater that was very influential at that time. These were very literary plays; Edward Bond, particularly, was doing very literary plays, but there was a great deal of violence in them, there was a great deal of unfettered sexuality in them, and there was a strong political agenda. Those plays were important to me. They were a powerful influence. What else? Oh, Jacobean plays. Punch and Judy. Pantomime. A whole host of things, many of which seemed almost contradictory. There was a sort of sense that I was trying to marry up opposites. There's a play I'm doing right now called *CRAZY FACE*, subtitled *A COMEDY WITH LIONS*, which I'm editing. It's a play that dates from 1982 and it's about clowns and lions and pantomime horses and violent death. It's very much a play which brings together apparently contradictory elements and watches them clash onstage.

SS: Working with virtually no budget, did you feel you had to go for more shocking effects to get an audience's attention?

CB: More shocking effects were tough to achieve on no budget! Actually, I think it made the plays more literary, because words are cheap. An actor speaking is just about the cheapest effect you can get. (Laughs) So my plays tend to be quite verbally dense, with the exception

of something like *FRANKENSTEIN IN LOVE*. That was anomalous in a sense; we had a bit more money for it and it definitely plunged into the Grand Guignol tradition of tricks and onstage special effects. But *THE HISTORY OF THE DEVIL*, *COLOSSUS*, *CRAZY FACE*, *SUBTLE BODIES*, and *PARADISE STREET* are relatively—well, actually, they're almost entirely free of that kind of expensive trickery.

SS: At the same time you were doing this, you began making experimental films.

CB: I made two films which went on to be put on video: *SALOME*, which I did when I was 18, and *THE FORBIDDEN*, which I did when I was 19. Both short, dark pieces. *SALOME* is seven minutes long and shot on 8mm; *THE FORBIDDEN* was shot on 16mm, but we printed it in negative because we didn't have the money to print it in positive. We designed the whole thing to be shot on negative. I was quite surprised to see how many people got something out of them on video. I mean, they're 25 years old. God help us—25!

SS: There seems to be a very strong Kenneth Anger influence.

CB: You're right! You're exactly right! I saw Anger's movies at a very active little film society in Liverpool in the sixties. Liverpool was quite a place to be in the sixties. Ginsberg had come over and called Liverpool the Haight Ashbury of England. It was a place where poets and, obviously, musicians—the Beatles and all the many bands that followed in their wake—were active. So I saw all the Warhols and the Angers and the usual suspects at that time. One of the things it made plain was that all you really needed was a camera. These were not technically very proficient pictures. There was something rather homemade about them, and that was very important to me. At a certain point in your life, you think, "Oh, now, wait a second! I can do this!" And it worked. The images that stick with me, specifically from *FORBIDDEN*, is the skin-peeling scene—all done



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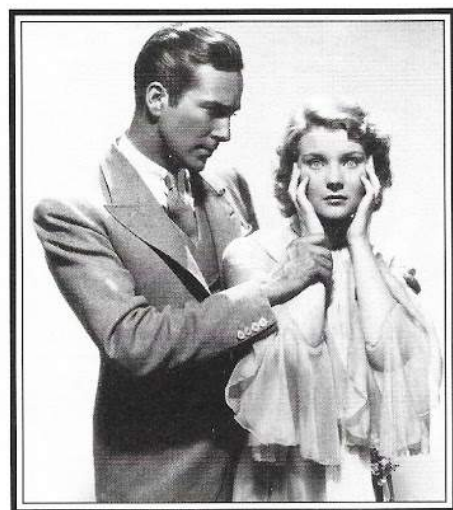
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with things you can find around your house right now. (Laughs) Torn T-shirts and pins and paints and baby oil, and a whole lot of patience from a whole lot of friends, many of whom have gone on to other things. Better and brighter things. Pete Atkins, who is the body that's being skinned in that particular scene...

SS: He's still talking to you?

CB: Isn't that amazing? He wrote HELLRAISER 2, 3, and 4. Doun Bradley, who's in it with his now wife, is the man behind the pins in HELLRAISER. It was a very creative time, a time when anything seemed possible. It was wonderful to have those models. Anger is a prime example of a filmmaker who just went and told his own mythology.

SS: At this time, were you a horror fan?

CB: Yes, I was a horror fan, but I've always been much more of an "imagination" fan. That is to say, I like horror movies, but I like fantasy movies and children's movies and science fiction movies. In other words, I like movies that stimulate my imagination. If somebody has asked me what I liked most I probably wouldn't have said horror movies; I'd have said fantasies. I saw FANTASIA when it came back in one of its many reissues in the sixties; I saw it seven times in one week. I saw the double bill of ONE MILLION YEARS B.C. and SHE that came around when I was 14, and I saw that six or seven times. There are entire sections of SHE that I can recite when drunk. (Laughs) I do Bernard Cribbins, I do a very good Peter Cushing as Holly—it was the most expensive movie that Hammer had made up until that time, and I think it's rather fine. It's got a wonderful score, and a lot of the poetry of Haggard's work is intact.

SS: So many modern films lack that sense of poetry.

CB: I think poetry has to come almost accidentally. You can't seek it too hard. It's the quest beast—the more you seek it, the more it's going to elude you. The trick is to say, "Well, can I put myself in a position where, if it comes to me, I won't reject it?" I think there's a strange, perhaps perverse poetry in some of my movies. Some of the images in the first HELLRAISER movie, in Pinhead, in Candyman, in the swords dropping on Swan in LORD OF ILLUSIONS—there's a kind of image which is not "on the nose" there to scare you, to make you jump, but has something else going on in it. Certainly the image of Pinhead falls into that category. Of course, to a huge extent this is in the eye of the beholder. What I find poetic, you might not—though it's likely we're going to have more things in common than Pat Buchanan and I. (Laughs) But there's certainly going to be some images which touch off something in ourselves, some point of reference which will go back to our own histories, something we've read or seen when we were kids. You'll find something and I'll find something else. I couldn't, if I was

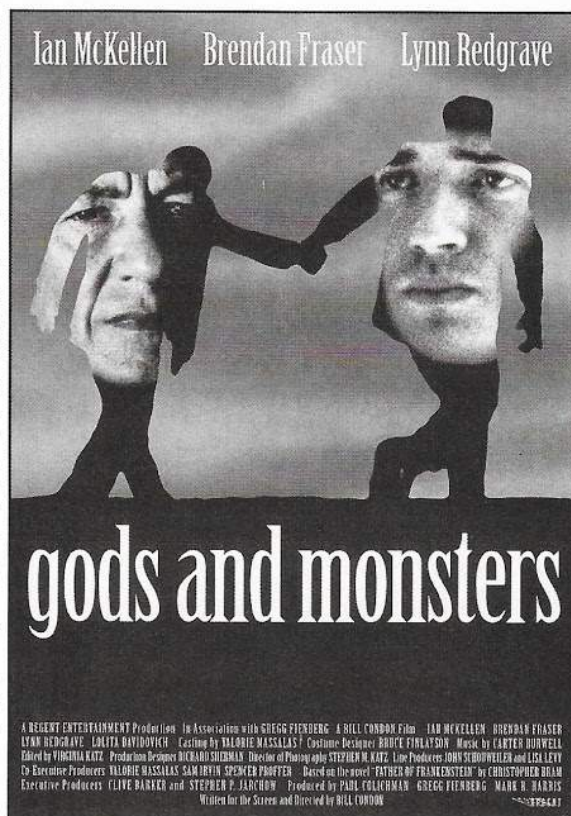
watching SHE now, defend it as great cinema, but that's really not the point. If it moves you, it moves you.

SS: The works that established you were The Books of Blood.

CB: There were six of them in England. They were ideas which I just needed to express. They followed my playwriting, so there's an interesting theatricality in the writing, and I think an interesting indifference to what the genre normally does—which came as much as anything out of ignorance.

SS: The imagery sticks with the reader. It's very much like Ray Bradbury in that regard.

CB: Ray's a master of that. When I first picked up *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, when I was about nine, a door opened into another space, a space that was not only an imaginative space, but



a linguistic space. I hadn't read fiction that used words like that before. I was enchanted. And nothing in my life compares with picking up a book that enchants me and enraptures me. I love movies, I love looking at paintings, but to be seized by a book, to be folded into the words and captured is quite without parallel as an experience.

SS: How do you prepare to write a story?

CB: Structure and analysis and notes—obsessive notes—and just really trying to prepare myself as much as possible, so that once I get into the flow nothing interrupts me. The trick for me is to prepare the ground as fully as possible, so that I'm not in a situation where I'm two, three months into writing a book and I suddenly hit a place where I don't know where the narrative's supposed to go. I can't do what I know a lot of authors do—Steve falls into this category,

Stephen King—which is literally sit down at page one and start. I can't do that. I need to structure the thing, I need to analyze what I'm doing thematically, I need to agonize over who the characters are going to be, their names... all of that might take me six weeks, and I'll have hundreds and hundreds of pages with notes and names and little pieces of research. Then and only then do I let rip and start.

SS: Do your fans think of you primarily as a writer or a filmmaker?

CB: Well, we have a website called The Web of Lost Souls, and I would say the bulk of the people who visit think of me as a writer. But if you were to go into the malls of America and ask "Who's Clive Barker," they'd say, "Oh, he made the fellow with the pins in his face!"

SS: Even though you do other things, you are in a sense typecast as a horror writer. Does that help you to get other projects off the boards?

CB: Yes. I've created franchises—Pinhead and Candyman—and people in this town say, "Well, Barker makes modestly-scaled movies that make money."

SS: But do you think writing sequels is sometimes a way to avoid having to come up with fresh ideas?

CB: The truth of the matter is that the movie will be made with or without me, so I may as well be onboard as not. I think there's an element of truth in what you say, but there is also a long and honorable tradition in horror and fantasy movies that they do result in sequels. We were talking about BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN. Val Lewton's CAT PEOPLE movies are wonderful. HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN and SON OF FRANKENSTEIN are very watchable. Throughout its history, the horror genre, whether it's the Universal cycle, the Hammer movies, Roger Corman's Poe series—which, even though they're not strictly sequels, bring back the same sort of characters and the same sort of situations, and when it comes to the burning house the same shots—the horror genre has a long

tradition of having sequels. The FRIDAY THE 13TH films, HELLRAISER, CANDYMAN—these are movies in which the audience definitely takes pleasure in the reappearance of the villain. When we first showed HELLRAISER 2, Pinhead came on the screen and the audience went bananas.

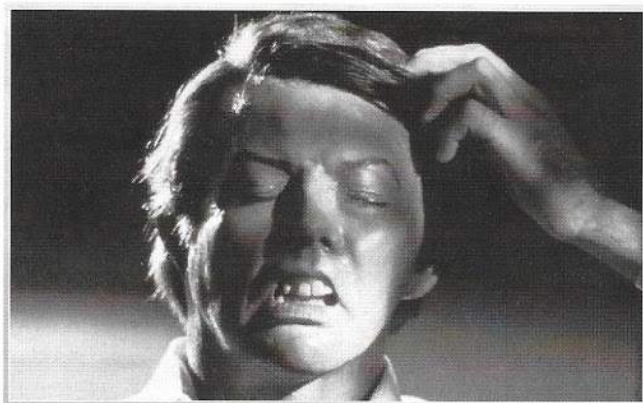
SS: One last question, if you will: In the early eighties, two of your stories were optioned for films...

CB: Well, one was a story and one was an original screenplay.

SS: RAWHEAD REX and TRANSMUTATIONS. What did you think of them?

CB: Oh, I hated them with a passion! I haven't seen them for many a long year and hope never to see them again. But they were the films that made me go and make HELLRAISER. It seemed to me,

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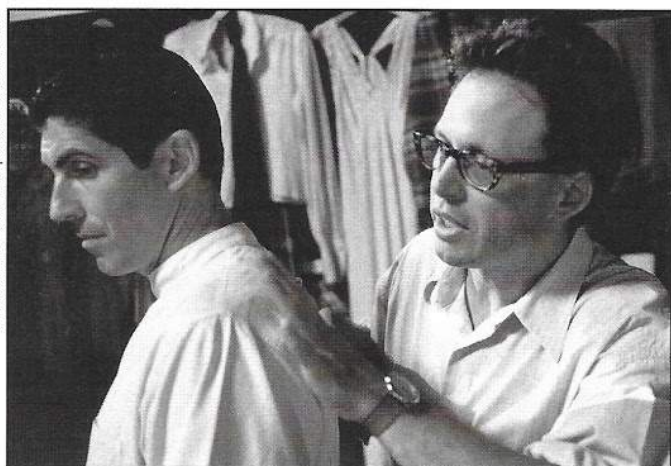
Monster Maker **Bill** *Condon*

interviewed by Richard Valley

The old dark house is nearly devoid of life, the hushed voices of its two occupants—one man white-haired and frail, the other young, rugged, naked—echoing through the dimly-lit rooms. Outside, a storm rages, an occasional brief flash of blue-white lightning brightening the house's shadowy interior. The old man fumbles in the kitchen for a souvenir of his long-past exploits in the Great War, when suddenly a low, strangely familiar growl draws his attention and a vivid thunderbolt reveals the sad, questioning face of the Frankenstein Monster.

Not just a Frankenstein Monster, mind you . . .

The Frankenstein Monster. The Monster of FRANKENSTEIN (1931), BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1935), and their six sequels. The Monster who made a star of Boris Karloff. The Monster who immortalized the man who first gave him life on the silver screen, the same white-haired old man



PREVIOUS PAGE: An alien removes his outer human disguise in *STRANGE INVADERS* (1983), Brendan Fraser gets under Sir Ian McKellen's skin in *GODS AND MONSTERS* (1998), and Bill Condon presides over all. **LEFT:** James Lecesne played makeup master Jack Pierce in a scene cut from *GODS AND MONSTERS*. Lecesne wrote the award-winning short film, *TREVOR* (1998). **RIGHT:** Clay Boone (Brendan Fraser) and Hannah (Lynn Redgrave) discuss their troubled employer, James Whale.

who meets him one last time in a sumptuous Hollywood estate in the late spring of 1957 . . .

James Whale.

The Hollywood director, seemingly a forgotten man in the decades immediately following his death on May 29, 1957, has proven himself immortal in recent years, with a biography by James Curtis in 1982 (*James Whale, Scarecrow Press*), another by Mark Gatiss in 1995 (*James Whale: A Biography or The Would-be Gentleman*, Cassell), a second book by Curtis in 1998 (*James Whale: A New World of Gods and Monsters*, Faber and Faber)—and, in 1995, *Father of Frankenstein* (Dutton), a haunting, fictional rumination on Whale's final days by Christopher Bram.

"When the legend becomes the fact, print the legend," says a character in John Ford's *THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE* (1962). The same holds true of filming the legend. It is Bram's book—not the biographies—that has found its way onto the screen as *GODS AND MONSTERS*, a Lions Gate Films release directed by Bill Condon, and it is this film that contains Whale's imaginary kitchen encounter with his most famous fiend. Condon has a long string of genre credits, beginning with his work as a screenwriter on *STRANGE BEHAVIOR* (1981) and its follow-up, *STRANGE INVADERS* (1983). He made his directorial debut with *SISTER, SISTER* (1987), then wrote and directed *MURDER 101* (1991), for which he won an Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America. His later credits include *DEAD IN THE WATER* (1991) and *CANDYMAN: FAREWELL TO THE FLESH* (1995), which first brought him into contact with horror great Clive Barker, executive producer on *GODS AND MONSTERS*.

"I got involved with this project simply by reading the novel by Christopher Bram," Bill Condon recalled in a recent talk with *Scarlet Street*, "which I was drawn to because it was about James Whale, whose movies I've loved for so long. When I read it, I saw that Chris had been able to take Whale's life and spin this story around it, a story that was so complicated dramatically. I thought it was one of those rare novels that should be a movie. We'd be able to do things in a movie that maybe Chris was unable to do in the novel, so that a movie could stand up next to the novel as its equal, while also being something very different. For example, there's a single line in the novel about how Whale, suffering from a stroke, sometimes wished that he could have his brain washed. In the movie, that turned into a whole sequence where Whale imagines himself as the Monster on the slab, with Clay Boone [the rugged young man mentioned above] as his Dr. Frankenstein, pulling out the old brain and putting in a new one."

If literal brain washing is something of a scientific conundrum, then getting the rights to use the legendary (and legendarily copyrighted) Jack Pierce Monster makeup in a non-Universal picture is no less out of the ordinary. Luckily, Condon had an ace up his sleeve.

"I have a friend who works at Universal. I can't say who it is and I hope Universal never figures it out, but he just sort of amazingly got us in under the radar. He was able to sign off on the makeup. If I weren't for him, I don't know what we would have done, because it's such an important part of the movie. And it was also important to be able to show the clips. I really, really sweated that one out."

The clips under discussion were all lifted lock, stock, and cosmic diffuser from *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. In *GODS AND MONSTERS*, James Whale (brilliantly played by Sir Ian McKellen in an Oscar-worthy performance) and his maid, Hannah (a wonderfully comic Lynn Redgrave), watch the director's seriocomic masterpiece on late-night television, prompting a flashback to the actual making of the film and appearances by Elsa Lanchester (Rosalind Ayres), Ernest Thesiger (Arthur Dignam), and Colin Clive (Matt McKenzie). In reality, it would have been quite impossible for Whale to view his classic *FRANKENSTEIN* sequel on TV, since it did not make its debut until well over a year after his death (as part of the "Son of Shock" horror movie package)—but allowances must be made for dramatic license. Certainly, for Condon, the *BRIDE* sequence was a never-to-be-forgotten experience and well worth a slight rewriting of reality.

"God, it was just so thrilling! I got chills; it felt like the first time I stepped onto a movie set. First of all, to build the set again to the original specs . . . I did something that I saw a lot of people do during those few days of filming; I scampered up and down those steps the way the characters in the original film did. It's an incredibly magic, religious feeling. You reach the top of that staircase and there's just a little piece of wood that stops you from going over into nothingness. And that's what they all faced when they made *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. We used the original specs, but we couldn't go quite as high, because we didn't have a soundstage that went as high."

Something else that the *GODS AND MONSTERS* company didn't have was Ken Strickfaden's original laboratory equipment, last seen in Mel Brooks' *YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN* (1974). It's all the more impressive, then, that the machinery in *GODS AND MONSTERS* is so perfectly in character.

"Richard Sherman and his design team did a truly wonderful job," enthused Condon. "They didn't have a lot



LEFT: At a party at the home of George Cukor, Boris Karloff (Jack Betts), James Whale (Ian McKellen), and Elsa Lanchester (Rosalind Ayres) pose for obsessed fright fan Edmund Kay (Jack Plotnick) and his cameraman (David Fabrizio). Kay has secretly arranged a reunion of Whale and his "monsters." RIGHT: In a flashback to the Universal Studios in 1935, Whale and Lanchester prepare to film the unveiling of the Monster's Mate for his classic *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*.



of money, either. They just seemed to pull it out of a hat. I know there are places that have the original equipment, but we tried to find them and couldn't. So it was all rebuilt from scratch—beautifully!

"It was also such fun to see the Whale character in his prime. That helped to make it such an exhilarating scene to shoot, that sense of being there at the creation of the Bride—and not just the creation of the Bride, but the creation of that particular movie."

As given new life in *GODS AND MONSTERS*, we see the filming of the scene in which Clive and Thesiger (as Henry Frankenstein and Dr. Pretorius) unveil their horrid handiwork. A short, earlier sequence featuring Boris Karloff (Amir Aboulela), his face half-obscured by fake hair and latex as the Monster is fashioned by Jack Pierce (James Lecesne), was cut from the final print.

"We actually shot a scene in which Karloff is sitting in the makeup chair, and Whale comes in and unveils the Bride for the first time. Whale is so excited that he's added shots of her to the schedule and tells Karloff that he won't be working today. It was a shame not to have that sort of half-Monster half-Karloff in the film, but we didn't use it because Rosalind Ayres, who played Elsa Lanchester in both 1935 and 1957, was actually closer in age to the older Elsa. The camera was in too close. It ruined the illusion a bit. In the scene that remains in the movie, Rosalind's far enough away that she conjures up the Elsa from *BRIDE*, which is obviously the indelible one.

"Amir Aboulela, the actor playing Karloff in that bit, is still in the film, though. He also plays him in that short moment in Whale's kitchen, when the storm reveals the Frankenstein Monster. The makeup looks like a mask, unfortunately, but it's really a full makeup. It actually took six hours to apply, and it came out looking to my mind like something you'd buy on Hollywood Boulevard—which is why the moment is so fleeting."

GODS AND MONSTERS, like *Father of Frankenstein* before it, follows James Whale through his sad, final days. Severely debilitated by a stroke that not only has robbed him of his creative powers, but repeatedly conjures up bittersweet memories of his troubled past, the director tries to commit a unique form of suicide by directing one last, real-life scenario. The plot: to throw Clayton Boone, his muscular gardener and part-time model, into such a mindless rage that the young man will kill him. The catalyst for Boone's rage: Whale's homosexuality.

"I hoped to capture as much of the novel as I could," said Condon, "because I thought it was so rich in incident and detail. There were so many different themes, about

being an artist, about an artist losing his powers, about being gay, about how gay people and straight people communicate with each other, about Whale's influences from his childhood and the war and how they informed the movies that he made—I just wanted to get as much of that into the movie as I could. The big challenge, obviously, is to get the essential parts, the best parts, the most dramatic parts. The structure of the book is extremely sound dramatically; Chris Bram had already done that, but the relationship between Whale and Clay had to be externalized. In the movie, they share more and have more of an obvious effect on each other.

"One of the scenes I added was an angry, emotional outburst for Brendan Fraser, who plays Clay Boone, in which he rails against Whale's sexuality. That's an exchange that isn't in the novel. I thought we needed it, because dramatically it shows how much Clay's involvement with Whale is starting to mean to him, in that he can later overcome his prejudices and come back. We shot all the encounters between Ian and Brendan in sequence, actually, so that when we got to the climax it was really the last scene between them. It was such a huge thing to build to that it just seemed the right way to do it."

Ironically, though the book's main plot sprang entirely from Bram's fertile imagination, one of the facts that inspired him to write the story—Whale's gender preference—is just the sort of detail traditionally shunned by most biopics, whether they concern show-biz personalities (Cole Porter in 1946's *NIGHT AND DAY* and Lorenz Hart in 1948's *WORDS AND MUSIC*) or what Mae West referred to as "hysterical characters" (Michelangelo in 1965's *THE AGONY AND THE ECSTASY*). Complicating the chances of getting *Father of Frankenstein's* sex-charged story before the cameras intact was the fact that most Hollywood big guns, even in the wake of such box-office hits as *THE CRYING GAME* (1992), *THE BIRDCAGE* (1996), and *IN AND OUT* (1997), are still leery of gay-themed films, especially when the films are based on fact and set in their own back yards. Condon readily conceded that the stubborn closet mentality still governing much of the movie capital sometimes made filming an uphill climb.

"There is still extent in Hollywood a generation that is . . . well, discreet might be a nice word to describe it. I think Roddy McDowall might symbolize that. I remember being with Curtis Harrington at *SWAN LAKE* and meeting Roddy McDowall backstage. Curtis introduced me as the person who was going to make this movie about James Whale, and McDowall made a face and said, 'Oh, nobody ever liked him!' McDowall was in the George Cukor camp,



The artist at work. LEFT: James Whale takes a brush to Boris Karloff on the set of *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, the better to muss him up for an upcoming scene—and the better to get his own picture in the papers. RIGHT: In *GODS AND MONSTERS*, Whale (Ian McKellen) tries to paint after suffering a stroke, but his creative powers have failed him. BELOW: An actual painting by Whale, used as background in *GODS AND MONSTERS*.

the discreet, let's only do it behind closed doors camp—and it was funny to see that there are still people holding onto that and still taking the same position, even though it's 40 years down the line."

Even after the film had been completed, the subject matter almost kept it from seeing, if not the light of day, then the dark of a movie theater. "We had a terrific reception at the Sundance Festival. We didn't have a distributor then, and all the big companies sent people to see us. Well, usually there's a gay person very close to the top in Hollywood, and they were very supportive of the film. Women, too. Then we would reach the absolute top person and they'd decide not to pick us up. I just can't help but think that it had to do with the homosexuality. There's a certain discomfort. With somebody like Harvey Weinstein at Miramax, that was definitely the case."

Amazingly, even Universal, the studio at which James Whale had his greatest triumphs, was loath to touch *GODS AND MONSTERS*. "It's bizarre, isn't it? I don't have any idea why that happened. But we finally hooked up with Lions Gate and they've been wonderful. They totally believe in the movie and they put up a lot of money, so I think it all worked out for the best."

The reluctance on Hollywood's part to pick up *GODS AND MONSTERS* is even more disconcerting when the film's rave reviews and awards are taken into consideration. (Among the awards: the Golden Space Needle Award for Best Director at the Seattle International Film Festival, and a special award from the Academy of Science Fiction, Horror and Fantasy Films.) The accolades have been very gratifying to Condon, who viewed the film as the fulfillment of a career-long ambition.

"I've been a horror fan from the beginning—and a Whale fan, too. In fact, in *STRANGE BEHAVIOR* there's a little bit of shadow play that was inspired by *OLD DARK HOUSE*. So I have a long-standing interest, specifically in the kind of movie that, like Whale's, is a mix of horror and truly off the wall wit. The ripeness of Whale's movies, too, that wonderful sense of design—it's something I've always aspired to, at least. And since film was the medium that he worked in, the idea with *GODS AND MONSTERS* was to make a James Whale film about James Whale."

In order to create the proper Whalean atmosphere, Condon made a number of alterations to Bram's characters, including a change of nationality for the maid played by Lynn Redgrave. "In the book she's Mexican, but I changed that. First of all, Whale himself had a cook and a housekeeper named Anna and Johanna—after people had met them once, he'd quiz

them on which was which. At that period in the fifties, you had a black maid or a European maid or an English maid—but not Mexican, as it is in the book. That happened in the sixties. So I thought having Lynn Redgrave play a German maid just connected another dot for me. There's such incredible irony in Whale's career; for example, *World War One* is the thing that got him out of his home town, Dudley, and also created a spot for him in London, in the arts, that might not otherwise have been available. Then *JOURNEY'S END*, the play and movie about the war brings him to Hollywood, and then the movie that does him in is *THE ROAD BACK*, another war picture. So to have that European presence in the form of Hannah, I thought, would be interesting. Also, along with Jack Plotnick, who plays an obsessed horror fan, Lynn's character and performance is the biggest nod in the direction of the James Whale style. We have the scene where

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Curtis Harrington

Remembers James Whale

An interview by Ken Hanke

Wonderful as Bill Condon's *GODS AND MONSTERS* is as a film and as the definitive portrait of James Whale (albeit in a wholly fictional story), the question naturally arises: How does the film and the portrait stack up when viewed by someone who actually knew Whale? Certainly there is no one better qualified to offer an opinion than Curtis Harrington, previously interviewed in *Scarlet Streets* #11, #12, and #14. Harrington not only knew James Whale but has the added advantage of being both an accomplished filmmaker (1963's *NIGHT TIDE*, 1971's *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?*) and a savvy film historian in his own right.

Scarlet Street: So—what did you think of *GODS AND MONSTERS*?

Curtis Harrington: Well, I thought it was very good. I did not read the novel, so I cannot comment on the novel. When I first heard about it and its theme, I didn't like the idea of it at all. It didn't seem to be what James Whale would have done or how he would have felt. And then the film did not disturb me, really. I thought it was a very nice apocryphal portrait of James—as you know, the story is pure fiction. I have very ambivalent feelings about that, generally. It's one thing to do an adaptation of facts; it's another to create something out of whole cloth. But in the end, because of Ian McKellen's wonderful performance, which really captured the essence of James Whale as I knew him, I thought it was very nicely done, and a tribute to James Whale.

SS: The film is gentler than the book. It presents a more human picture of Whale. The book is somehow rougher and the author, Christopher Bram, presents a more cynical picture.

CH: Well, the author didn't know Mr. Whale. That's a very cheeky thing to do, but anyway he did it. The film, however—I think it creditable. My main objection to the film was the director's choice of this really irritating young man who comes to visit Whale. I didn't see the point of that.

SS: Oh, the film student played by Jack Plotnick—the one with the awful laugh!

CH: He was just outstandingly repellent and I didn't see the point of that at all. That's my personal reaction.

SS: You're not alone. And he didn't seem the type of man James Whale would ask to remove his clothes.

CH: Exactly. Exactly. Very good point! I felt the same way. (Laughs) And I know that James Whale wouldn't have asked such a young man to take his clothes off or had that kind of flirtation with him at all! He should have been a comely youth of some sort—a serious young film student who was attractive in some way. Well, that was Bill Condon's choice and I haven't really had a discussion with him about it. That was the one thing that irritated me.

SS: But you're satisfied with Ian McKellen.

CH: Bill arranged for me to spend an afternoon with Ian McKellen before the film was started. I gave him as many memories of James and his behavior and his attitudes as I could, and I think—I really think that Ian used a lot of the material in creating his portrayal of James. For one thing, you say in the book he's very cynical, and he was not a cynical person at all. That already was a wrong-headed view of Whale. Whale was witty and charming. I kept telling Ian, the main thing about James that I remember was his wonderful sense of humor. He found humor in just about everything—and it was good humor, it was sweet humor; it wasn't cynical and nasty at all.

SS: That's pretty much the way he is presented in the film. It's a distinct improvement on the book.

CH: I'm an old friend of Bill Condon and I should have imagined he would have improved it.

SS: What do you think of the other portraits in the film?

CH: Well, I didn't know those people too well. I knew Elsa Lanchester in her last years. I thought that was a very clever bit of casting, to find someone who so much resembled her and gave a good imitation of her voice. [Rosalind Ayres] And the fellow who played Karloff [Jack Betts] was absolutely wonderful with the makeup they did. It was similar to what they did with the Bela Lugosi character in *ED WOOD*—with that subtle application of makeup to make the person really, really look like the original. And whoever they found to play Thesiger was quite wonderful! [Arthur Dignam] The one casting that was completely off the mark was the actor they found to play George Cukor in the party scene. [Martin Ferrero] He's as unlike George Cukor as anyone could possibly be, but that only matters to someone who really knew what Cukor looked like, which is not the mass public.

SS: And what about David Lewis, as played by David Duke?

CH: Oh, I knew him very well! The David Lewis was all right. I mean, the man doesn't look at all like David Lewis, but David Lewis was always very well-dressed and dapper and charming, and he conveyed that.

SS: In both the film and the novel, Whale is presented as being less than fond of Karloff. This is also hinted at, for that matter, in James Curtis' book on Whale.

CH: Well, I could only read between the lines. He never said, "I like Karloff," or "I don't like Karloff," but he told me a couple of key—I think very revealing stories about Karloff. It was when they made *FRANKENSTEIN*. As I said, the key thing about Whale was his humor; his humor informed his films, his humor informed his life and his relationships—and he once told me, "You know, when we made the original *FRANKENSTEIN*, we had a lot of laughs on the set. We found everything terribly amusing—and Karloff did, too. But the moment he



James Whale and Curtis Harrington

came successful and overnight turned into a star, he began to take himself terribly seriously." When Karloff did *THE MUMMY*, he sent a messenger boy, saying, "Mr. Whale, Mr. Karloff would like to see you in the makeup department." So he led Jimmy with great ceremony into the makeup department, where Karloff was sitting covered in the chair, and they did a kind of unveiling to show off the makeup that had been created for *THE MUMMY*. And James Whale said to me, "It looked like they'd thrown everything on his face but the kitchen sink!" Karloff said, "I think this will be the most marvelous thing ever seen on the silver sheet!" Jimmy thought that was hugely funny, but Karloff was, as I say, taking himself very seriously by then. The humor that was shared on *FRANKENSTEIN* had vanished and Jimmy obviously didn't appreciate that, especially since he'd picked Karloff out of the commissary to play the part and he was no one when he picked him out.

SS: *That's always been the problem with Karloff's story about demanding that the drowning scene be cut from FRANKENSTEIN. Did he have such power?*

CH: I'm sure he didn't have any power—then.

SS: *What is your favorite James Whale film?*

CH: Oh, *THE OLD DARK HOUSE*! I don't know if you know the story about

how I saved *THE OLD DARK HOUSE*? You see, I was aware that the film no longer had any commercial value for Universal, because the rights to the story had been resold to Columbia for that very bad remake. That meant that the film itself had no further commercial value, so I knew that they would not make any effort to preserve it. When I went to Universal under contract to make my film *GAMES*, with Simone Signoret, I made *OLD DARK HOUSE* one of my personal quests. I became friendly with the head of the editorial department and I said, "You've got to find the negative for me. It's moldering somewhere in one of your vaults." He made some inquiries and said, "Oh, they say they can't find it." I said, "Well, try again. It's there. It's got to be there. Please, please—it's so important!" Finally, after quite a long while, he called me and said, "Well, I finally had word from New York. They've found the original negative and the protection lavender on *THE OLD DARK HOUSE*." Well, the next step, knowing that Universal would not pay to have anything saved, was to contact Eastman House, the Museum of Modern Art film library, and the American Film Institute in Washington. James Card, who was at that time the head of Eastman House, telephoned me immediately and said, "We'll put up all the costs

to have this saved." Then it was just a matter of going through all the motions. They examined the negative and the first reel had already begun to turn to slush. They had to make a dupe negative from the protection lavender of the first reel, but they were able to print the rest of the film from the original negative. It's a wonderful film. It's my personal favorite of all of James Whale's films—and I think it's the most personal of all his films. The humor is pure Whale from beginning to end.

SS: *REMEMBER LAST NIGHT? is a forgotten gem.*

CH: Oh, yes! One day, when I was talking to James—in those days you couldn't see his films that easily—one day I said, "Are there any of your films that you particularly like, or would particularly recommend to me?" And he said, "Well, there's *REMEMBER LAST NIGHT*." That was the film that he particularly recommended to me—and, of course, I didn't see it until many years later.

SS: *What's your personal take on the two James Whale biographies?*

CH: Well, I only know the James Curtis.

SS: *You don't know the Mark Gatiss one from England?*

CH: No, I don't know a thing about it. I haven't seen it. I know James Curtis. I

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Can you identify the bogus horror film director? It isn't Curtis Harrington on the left: he directed *NIGHT TIDE* (1963), *WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?* (1971), and *THE KILLING KIND* (1973), among others. It isn't Bill Condon in the center: he directed *STRANGE INVADERS* (1983) and *CANDYMAN: FAREWELL TO THE FLESH* (1995). No, it's Ian McKellen on the right, pretending to be James Whale, director of *FRANKENSTEIN* (1931), *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* (1932), *THE INVISIBLE MAN* (1933), and *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1935).





It takes brains to put together as complicated a motion picture as *GODS AND MONSTERS*, so executive producer Clive Barker and director Bill Condon kept a fresh supply on hand—just in case they had to pop a spare into the open noggin of their star, Sir Ian McKellen.

BILL CONDON

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Hannah and Whale are watching Una O'Connor on television together, and in fact there's one imaginary suicide scene in the film—which we shot a second way, but ultimately didn't use—in which Hannah bursts into Whale's room wearing all those ribbons in her hair, like O'Connor in *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*.

Redgrave's is just one memorable performance in a film filled with them. First and foremost is Sir Ian McKellen, who brings James Whale to life in such a way that even those who knew the director personally are pleased. (See CURTIS HARRINGTON REMEMBERS JAMES WHALE on page 37.) In this instance, the gay storyline proved a help, not a hindrance.

"Certainly the subject matter helped us get Ian, who came out publicly 10 years ago. He considers celebrated actors and celebrities who remain in the closet to be . . . well, toxic. He holds them responsible for teenage suicides. He so strongly believes in being out that he was very excited about playing this part. And he's an artist, too; I don't think he'd ever be interested in making just a simple piece of propaganda. He was also attracted to the idea that this was not just a gay man, but a man in decline. It's a wonderful performance. He's always been wonderful, but there's something about this part; he lets you see into his soul.

"Once we had Ian, he acted as sort of a magnet for other actors. I was so happy that Brendan Fraser agreed to play Clay Boone. This is a character who has to be tall enough to be a physical threat to Whale. Ian's a great actor, and he can certainly suggest frailty, but he's six foot one, so we had to have a Clay Boone with the demeanor and appearance of the Monster—and again, like Karloff, he had to be a Monster with a soul. He had to have a poetry to him. When you think about it, there are not too many actors who fill the bill. The character of Clay is an unformed, inarticulate man with everything raging on the inside, and that's the hardest thing to play. I just marveled at what Brendan was able to do, just at the way he listened. He

brought such variety and imagination to that. Also, Brendan has an amazingly natural comic flare, and any chance that we had to find something humorous or eccentric in the character, he found it."

Condon's script originally called for full-frontal exposure for Fraser in the climactic confrontation between Whale and Boone, but as the day approached to film the scene Fraser, fresh from his severely underdressed turn in *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE* (1997), balked at the additional exposure. Put on the spot, Condon maintained, with only the slightest hesitancy, that it all turned out for the best.

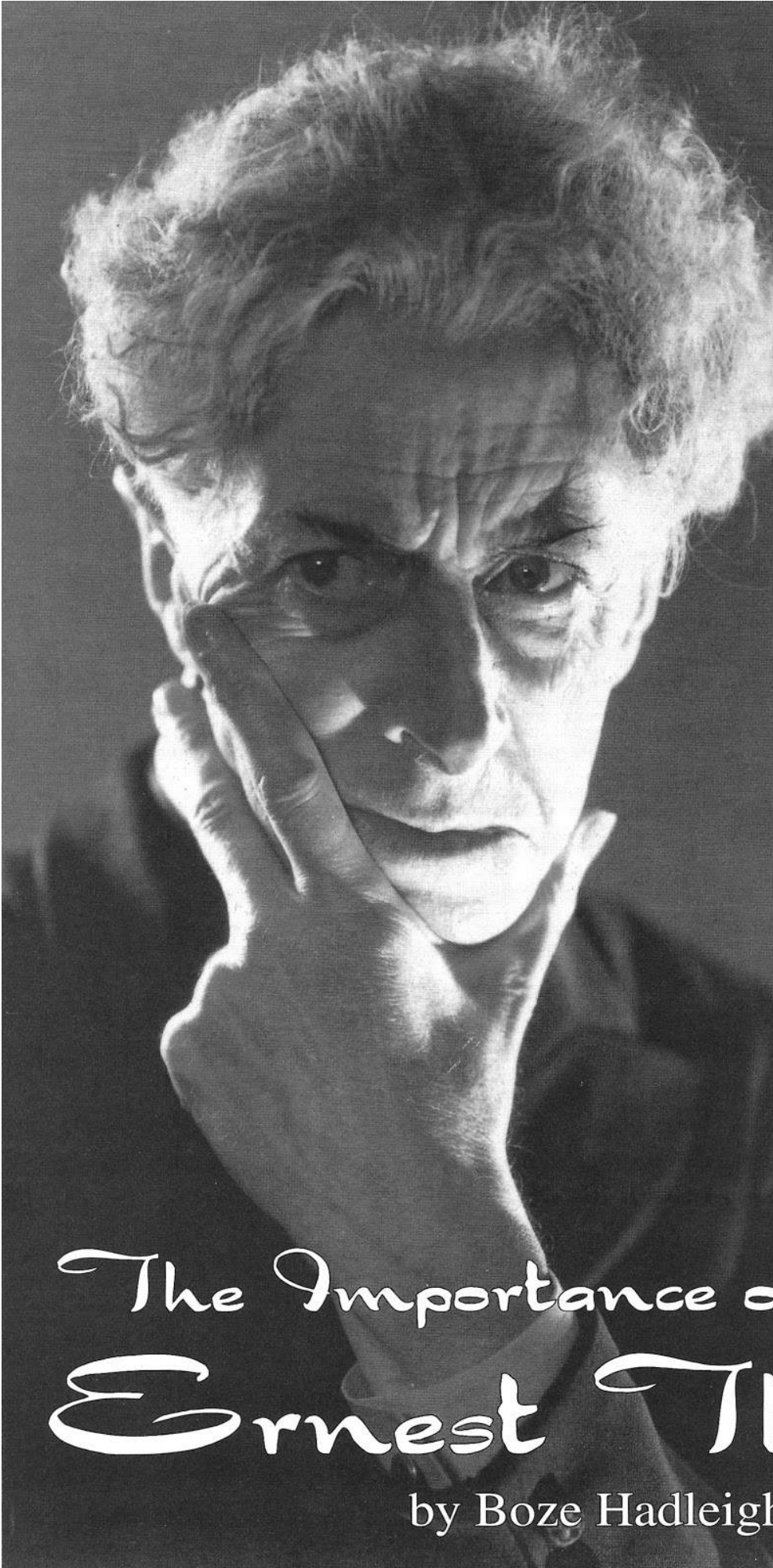
"Well, probably, the way it is in the movie is the right way. It's the critical moment when he finally does take his clothes off for Whale, and if we had shown actual genitalia at that moment the audience would have focused on that. To take anything anyway from the drama of the moment probably wouldn't have worked."

Still, for those who welcome the occasional distraction of genitalia, *GODS AND MONSTERS* delivers in its evocation of one of Whale's notorious all-male, nude swimming parties. This scene created problems of its own, strangely enough, and they stemmed from the gay community.

"We had no restrictions whatsoever over what we could show in the film, but in the beginning we were getting these politically correct responses: 'Why don't we show more positive images?' It was understandable. For so long, gay people in movies have mainly been presented as psychopaths or suicides, and since Whale was a suicide we were putting something out there with elements that made people uncomfortable, that made gay boosters uncomfortable. Hopefully we're moving into that phase where we can portray a more complicated personality, and not have to worry about it being 'correct.'"

Happily, "correct" was the watchword when it came to casting actors to play such colorful individuals as Ernest Thesiger, Elsa Lanchester, Colin Clive, and Boris Karloff. In the case of Thesiger, Condon turned to an old friend.

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His face was rarer than one in a million, and once seen, never forgotten. He was described as a living gargoyle, an English eccentric, and a Gothic grotesque: The tongue and the nose were both deemed razor-sharp, the eyes beady and penetrating, the mouth lipless and on the verge of a sarcastic titter. He was a famous stage actor in his day, an avid socialite, a close friend of Queen Mary, and was indelible in any film he appeared in, usually in small and ultramundane roles.

Ernest Thesiger (1879–1961) made his screen bow in 1918 and last appeared before the cameras for the 1961 filming of Tennessee Williams' *THE ROMAN SPRING OF MRS. STONE*, but he is best remembered for two horror films in which he was directed by James Whale: *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* (1932), in which he played Horace Femm, and *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1935), in which he came close to stealing the show as Dr. Septimus Pretorius.

The Importance of Being Ernest Thesiger

by Boze Hadleigh



Ernest Thesiger continued the association begun with Boris Karloff in *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* (1932) in the British *THE GHOUL* (1933). As a family servant, Thesiger coveted his dying employer's ring and met a gruesome fate when Karloff (as usual) proved not quite as dead as originally and so beautifully planned.

Thesiger's characters were inevitably underscored by waspish humor, malice, and cunning. His entrance in *OLD DARK HOUSE* was precious and dramatic, his sepulchral figure advancing on his guests and declaring with upturned nose, "My name is Femm—Horace Femm." A "dodderly old stick," said one critic; "a grasshopper with an English accent," said another.

The waspishness came naturally: Thesiger was a total snob. His grandfather was the first Lord Chelmsford, and Thesiger himself was drawn by Sargent, caricatured by Max Beerbohm, and painted on fans by Charles Condor—sometimes as Death, with his skullish face wreathed in scarlet poppies!

Though he was thoroughly spoiled, in 1915 Thesiger signed up for the Great War (World War I), and took his needlework with him—this was a lifelong hobby, and when he died he was lavishly obituarized in the *Journal of the Embroiderers' Guild*. Reputedly, he also took along some pearls, for Ernest was a pearl fancier and firmly believed that pearls would "die" unless kept next to warm, human skin. Indeed, Thesiger was quite the narcissist. He was a founding member of the Men's Dress Reform Society and wore pale moleskin shorts to show off his legs, of which he was quite proud.

Ernest Thesiger happened to be gay, though he exploded the needle-stitching, pearl-loving stereotype of homosexuals by fighting valiantly during the war (as have gay soldiers before and since Alexander the Great). There was also the fact that he was married for 44 years to the same woman—though marriages in which at least one of the partners is gay are, especially in theatrical circles, something of a stereotype themselves.

Following his war service, Thesiger, who was a cousin of a viceroy of India, forewent the civil service for acting school, where he fell in love with Willie Ranken; they remained nearly inseparable lifelong companions. But in 1917, Ernest wed Willie's sister Janette. (Willie, when he heard of the union, was so upset that he shaved off his hair!) The marriage was most likely due to his ambitions as an actor. (To rise to the top of the profession in those days, one couldn't be openly homosexual, so a marriage of convenience often proved convenient.) Thesiger was a favorite of Shaw, which now seems strange, since we view Thesiger exclusively as an eccentric, yet he was an admired stage actor.

Janette may have been homosexual herself, for she was part of the intimate circle of lesbian writer Ivy Compton-Burnett. Specifically, Janette had been the lover or bosom buddy of scholar Margaret Jourdain, who later became the

life partner of the famous novelist. The three women socialized often, and it was Ivy's conviction that there was no sexual "sin"—for anyone, of any sexuality—if there was no penetration. Janette had briefly tried the stage, but in those days it wasn't considered a ladylike profession.

Thesiger played a variety of stage roles, including some we might expect of him. He enacted Piers Gaveston, the lover of EDWARD II in the play by Christopher Marlowe. By 1915, he had dedicated himself to the stage, and declared, "There is no role, not anything I can name, which I will not consider, if they will allow me to undertake it." Doubtless he was a memorable Captain Hook in J. M. Barrie's *PETER PAN*. He was Bagoas the Eunuch in *JUDITH*. He was a witch in John Gielgud's 1942 production of *MACBETH*. Years later, the gay twosome—Gielgud hasn't denied rumors of a 1920s affair—were in another play in London. Sir John recalled:

"He was tiring fast, and I used to feel sad as I passed his open dressing room door to see him lying on the sofa half asleep between his scenes. He was an extraordinary and rather touching character, an actor of unique imagination, with a most beautiful perfection of speech and period style."

But a leading man—that, he wasn't often. Thesiger once complained to W. Somerset Maugham—a famous playwright before he was a famous novelist—that he never sent him any roles. Maugham replied, in his famous stutter, "B-but I am always writing p-parts for you, Ernest. The trouble is that somebody called Gladys Cooper will insist on playing them."

Now and again, Thesiger did some professional female impersonation. (One rumor had it that he sometimes wore green toenail polish beneath his socks!) In 1925, he appeared in a popular review, doing a Noel Coward number in drag with Douglas Byng, who was a star drag artiste, billed as "Bawdy But British." (Byng is best remembered as Monsieur Martin in the 1966 farcical gem, *HOTEL PARADISO*—out of drag, and with four daughters.) It was widely remarked that, as he aged, Thesiger, in his posture, his pearls, his hauteur, and even his hair and pointed features, increasingly resembled Queen Mary.

"He was amusing on the screen," allowed David Lewis, producer of such classic pictures as *CAMILLE* (1937), *DARK VICTORY* (1939), and *RAINTREE COUNTY* (1957). "In person, he was far from amusing." Lewis was in a position to know, for he was the life partner—for about a quarter century—of director James Whale, who had met Thesiger in England in 1919. "Jimmy said he'd first been attracted to Thesiger's campiness. Thesiger wasn't afraid



LEFT: It's no Holiday Inn, but *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* (1932) belonging to Horace and Rebecca Femm (Ernest Thesiger and Eva Moore) has its full complement of guests, including Sir William Porterhouse (Charles Laughton) and Gladys DuCane (Lillian Bond). Servant Morgan (Boris Karloff) takes the coats. **RIGHT:** Thesiger had a small but memorable role in *THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT* (1951), starring Alec Guinness.

to shock. At one party in the 1920s, he shocked everybody into silence while they were serving sherry. 'Anyone fancy a spot of buggery?' Jimmy found that uproarious. English sense of humor, you know.

"Jimmy was always platonic friends with Thesiger, of course. I lived with Jimmy, and Thesiger would come to visit, always impressed with our success, but he looked down on Americans. He was cold and arrogant. He'd talk with Jimmy and do his needlework. Usually I'd leave the room." Why did Whale put up with him? Lewis felt, "Well, he liked the society of fellow Englishmen, and Jimmy was in his way a social-climber, so he was impressed unduly, I think, by Thesiger's family connections. I know he admired Thesiger's diction, and in England the way you speak can set you up for life or ruin you."

Self-described "former Englishman" Quentin Crisp offered the following opinion of Ernest Thesiger: "I saw Mr. Thesiger as the Dauphin in Shaw's *SAINT JOAN* with Sybil Thorndike. A never-to-be forgotten production . . . I recall that in certain circles Ernest Thesiger and Esme Percy were assumed to be 'that way' from their very names alone . . . Somewhere I read that Mr. Thesiger had first set out to be a painter, but gave it up because he kept

painting over his canvases, out of sheer perfectionism. By 1909 or 1910 he had taken to the stage, then some time later he was lost to Hollywood . . ."

To most movie buffs, it is as *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*'s Dr. Pretorius that Thesiger is most famous. In the 1985 remake-of-sorts, *THE BRIDE*, Quentin Crisp more or less played his part, but the filmmakers abbreviated the role from the outset. "It was small to begin with, and most of that wound up on the proverbial cutting room floor," offered Crisp, who acted to greater effect in *ORLANDO* (1993). "The original character can nowadays most definitely be read as homosexual, but I'm sure that in the 1930s and for a long time thereafter, people did not perceive the truth of it."

Until recently, *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* was hardly ever seen, but video and laserdisc releases have proven it to be one "lost classic" that actually deserves the accolade. Boris Karloff is top billed, and the cast includes Charles Laughton, Raymond Massey, Gloria Stuart, and Melvyn Douglas, but Thesiger all but walks away with this most stylish (and aptly named) of old dark house stories. (Watchful viewers will note an in-joke reference to Thes-

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LEFT: Thesiger (pictured with Dean Stockwell and Wendy Hiller) bears a certain resemblance to his old friend James Whale in this still from *SONS AND LOVERS* (1960). **RIGHT:** The silk-stocking murderer of *THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT* (1938) was one of Thesiger's best roles, but the film is rarely shown.



So you think that effete crone of an actor, Ernest Thesiger, died back in 1961, do you? Well, guess again. The sepulchral voice, the delicate gestures, the frizzed white hair rivaling the Bride of Frankenstein's—it was all in its proper place when Arthur Dignam answered the call to play Thesiger playing Dr. Septimus Pretorius in a brief flashback sequence in the film *GODS AND MONSTERS*. The call came over an electrical device (we call them telephones, now) and over a great distance: from Hollywood to Sydney, Australia.

"Well, I was sitting in my flat in Sydney one day last year and Hollywood cried out for me," remembered Dignam with an ingratiating laugh. "It was Bill Condon, asking me what I would be doing in a month's time and I said, 'Nothing in particular.' He said, 'Could you come over and play Ernest Thesiger'—who was someone I knew of, though he wasn't anyone I'd ever actually seen in a movie. I'd never even seen *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, which was the film they were going to recreate. So Bill did an imitation of Ernest Thesiger over the telephone, which was really—compelling—and we took it from there."

Dignam's acting credits include roles in the movies and TV shows *GRENDAL GRENDAL* (1981), *STRANGE BEHAVIOR* (1981, also known as *DEAD KIDS*), *THE RETURN OF CAPTAIN INVINCIBLE* (1983), *THE STORYTELLER: PERSEUS AND THE GORGON* (1990), *THE NOSTRADAMUS KID* (1993), and *ESCAPE FROM JUPITER* (1994), so the role of an actor playing a role in a fantasy film didn't prove to be much of a stretch.

GODS AND MONSTERS takes us back to 1935 and the *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* set on the Universal lot. Director James Whale (played by Sir Ian McKellen) helps Elsa Lanchester (Rosalind Ayres, resplendent in the classic Bride makeup) onstage as she trades witticisms with Thesiger, and Whale frets over Colin Clive's level of sobriety. Whale has good reason to worry. Clive (Matt McKenzie), reprising his *FRANKENSTEIN* (1931) role as the Maker of Monsters, is nearing the end of the road to alcoholism, a road that will kill him the following year. But the show must go on, and it isn't long before Thesiger, Lanchester, and Clive are creating magic on camera.

Though Dignam was unfamiliar with Thesiger's acting, he was not entirely unacquainted with the family. ("I knew a lot about Ernest Thesiger's brother, in fact. I'd read a lot of Wilfred Thesiger's books. He was a famous English explorer of the Sahara Desert and the Arabian quarters.") And it wasn't long before he viewed Ernest's most famous role first hand.

"Before I left for America, I saw *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, which was the only one of his films we could run back in Sydney. In fact, it was the only Thesiger film I could find! Seeing him in *BRIDE* made me even more terrified at the prospect of playing him, because he's so extraordinary."

Dignam didn't have much time to worry about his portrayal, though, not on a film with only a 24-day shooting schedule. "I was in the States for 10 days and we shot the scene in one morning, about five o'clock one morning after a very long day in the studio. So I was there 10 days and I spent one hour shooting! It was really all done in one shot!"

Happily, the actor is very pleased with the results. "I've seen a tape of it, which isn't the ideal way of looking at it, but it's just a wonderful movie. Absolutely wonderful. You can tell that this was a film that meant

RIGHT: Arthur Dignam practices one of Ernest Thesiger's best-loved pastimes—embroidery—in a shot for *GODS AND MONSTERS* that unfortunately wound up on the cutting-room floor.

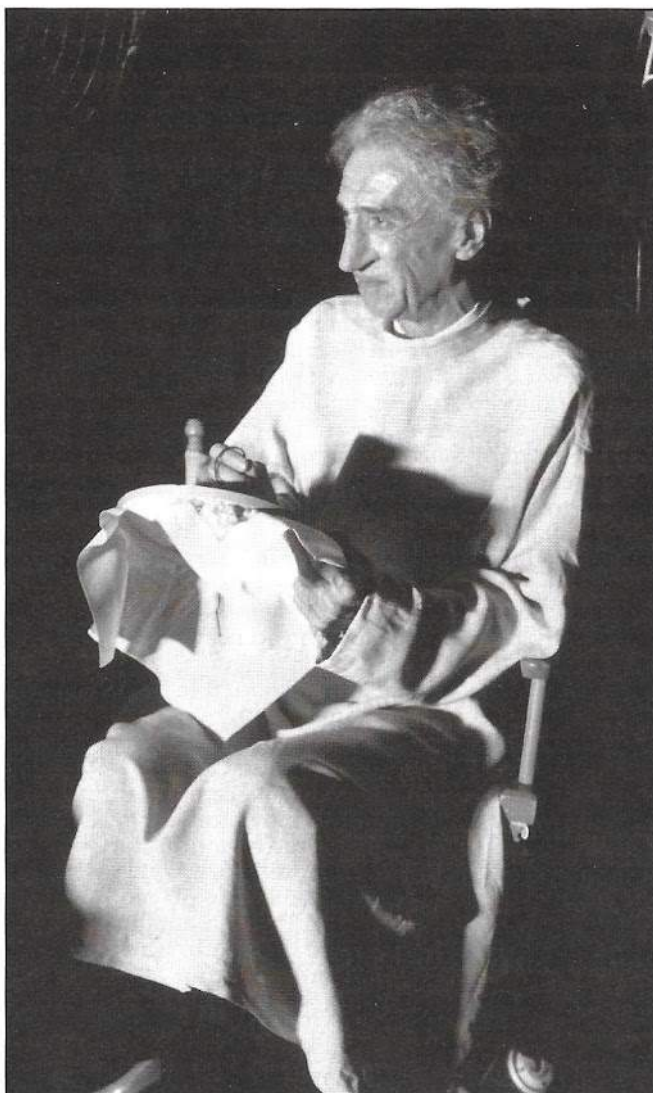
Arthur Dignam

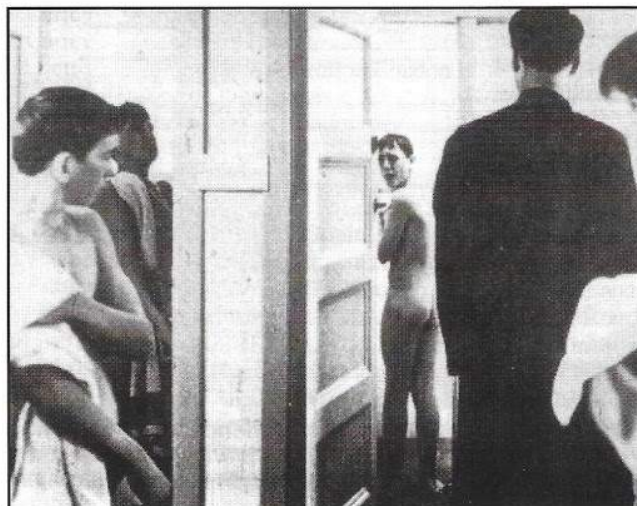
The Man Who Was Ernest Thesiger

An Interview by Richard Valley

something really deeply to Bill; it's made with such love and care. It certainly shows."

The affection in Dignam's voice is obvious when he refers to Condon, whom he has known and worked with for many years. "I first worked with Bill ages ago on *STRANGE BEHAVIOR* and he seems to be exactly the same, now. He's a wonderful and delightful man, just as





LEFT: Last minute adjustments are made on the set as Arthur Dignam waits to bring Ernest Thesiger back to life ("That should be really interesting!") in *GODS AND MONSTERS*. **RIGHT:** A schoolboy comes under the watchful gaze of Brother Francine (Dignam) in *THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND* (1976). **BELOW:** Dignam first met up with screenwriter and director-to-be Bill Condon during the making of *STRANGE BEHAVIOR* (1981).

he was then, and he seems not to have aged a split second. I don't quite know how he manages that, do you, but it isn't quite fair.

"*STRANGE BEHAVIOR* was an enjoyable film to make, too, not least because of Bill. I played Dr. Le Sangel in that. As a matter of fact, I think that was my first mad scientist. Of course, I've done a few since then; I've often been cast as mad scientists and priests in the past, but I think I've broken out of those. I seem to be getting into the land of indigent, elderly gentlemen—hobos and things. My most famous priest was in *THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND* in 1976, for which my back wound up on the movie poster." (Dignam played the role of Brother Francine, a man with a penchant for ogling the schoolboys under his care while they shower.)

For *GODS AND MONSTERS*, Dignam spent more time in the makeup chair than he did before the camera. "It took six hours to turn me into Thesiger! It was amazing! I'd had a life mask of my face done in Sydney, which was sent over to America and the makeup was designed on that. So they were prepared for me when I got there. When we finally started filming, the shot actually started off close on Thesiger doing his embroidery, but that was lopped from the front of the scene."

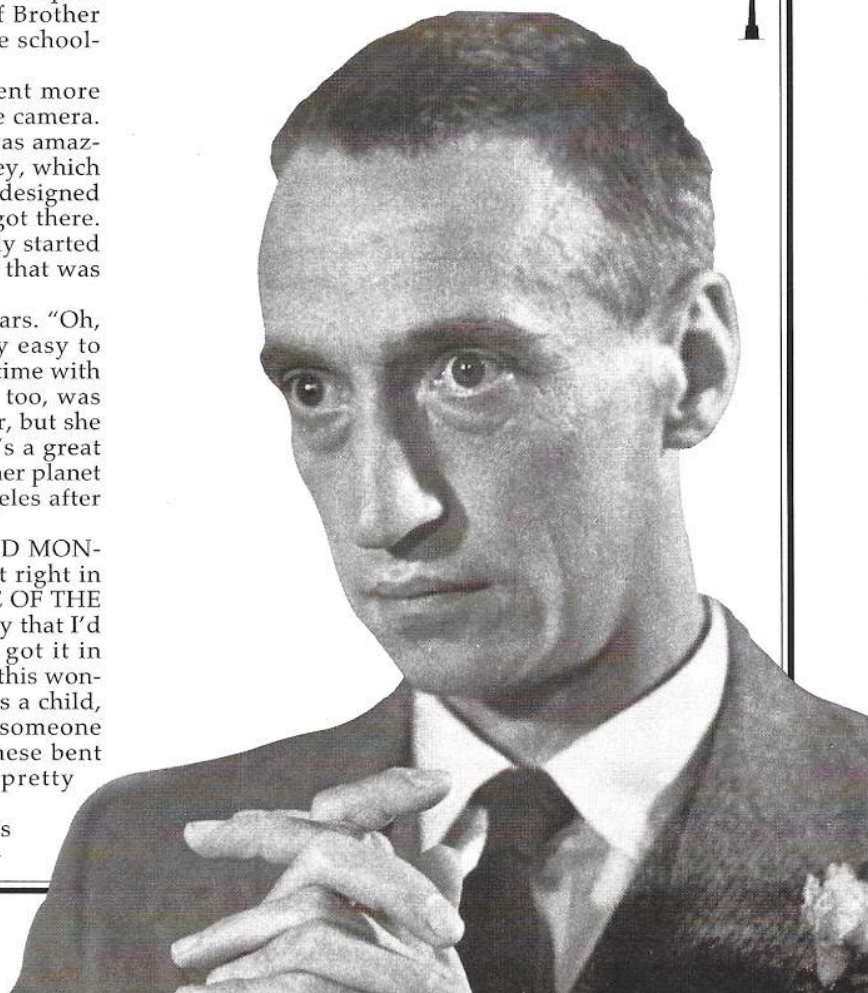
Dignam has nothing but praise for his costars. "Oh, Ian McKellen was wonderful. He's terrifically easy to work with and he's very amusing. I spent some time with him away from shooting. And Lynn Redgrave, too, was wonderful. I never got to do any scenes with her, but she was around. They're all terrific, aren't they? It's a great cast. And I felt as if I'd been transported to another planet with all of them, working in sunshiny Los Angeles after cold, rainy Sydney."

Much as he enjoyed himself on *GODS AND MONSTERS*, Dignam's favorite film role came about right in his native Australia. "I made a movie called *WE OF THE NEVER NEVER*, which was based on a true story that I'd read as a child. It was a famous story, and I got it in school and had to read it. I loved it. So I played this wonderful, romantic character that I'd read about as a child, and it was quite a wonderful change to play someone who was filled with affection instead of all these bent people. But I must say, Ernest Thesiger is a pretty nice role, too."

Yes, Thesiger is a pretty nice role, and so is the role he played in *BRIDE OF FRANKEN-*

STEIN: Dr. Septimus Pretorius, the skeletal gent with the homegrown brains and tiny bottle people, the man with but a single weakness—for gin. And cigars. Would Arthur Dignam want to be in the running for a chance to play Pretorius?

"Oh, yes, I certainly would, because it's such a stupendous role and such a wonderful movie. If they remade it, how could you not refuse to play that role? They're remaking everything these days, aren't they, so perhaps they'll get around to that. And after all," he added slyly, "I've already rehearsed for it, haven't I?"



ERNEST THESIGER

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iger's famous throwaway flower gag in the new *GODS AND MONSTERS*, which has Sir Ian McKellen as James Whale enter his studio, remove some flowers from a vase, and unceremoniously dump them in the trash.)

THE OLD DARK HOUSE may have finally seen the light of day, but still pretty much a fond memory is the 1938 British horror film *THEY DRIVE BY NIGHT*, about strangulation, with Thesiger as Hoover, a seemingly benign murder enthusiast who turns out to be a crazed killer. Said William K. Everson in *More Classics of the Horror Film* (Citadel, 1986): "Thesiger's ability to play for laughs one moment, and then summon up these demonic expressions of fury and blood lust, is quite remarkable."

Of course, the actor's medieval features suited him perfectly to period pictures such as *CAESAR AND CLEOPATRA* (1946), *JASSY* (1947), and *THE WINSLOW BOY* (1948). "People accuse me of acting for the sake of acting," he explained in the forties. "But I do from time to time say no to a role, if I am entranced with some other activity." Besides his embroidery and his high-flown socializing, he kept busy with a myriad of projects. For instance, Queen Mary's Doll's House at Windsor Castle features the Aubusson carpet and dining-room fire screens made by Thesiger, with the still life over the sideboard by his mate Willie.

It was reportedly Willie who "nagged" (Thesiger's word) his companion into a film studio. Willie found the cinema quite romantic. Thesiger took part in such productions as *THE GHOUL*, a 1933 British attempt to cash in on *THE MUMMY* (1932); it was Karloff's first British film and boasts Ralph Richardson's screen bow as a fake vicar. Richardson recalled decades later, "The medium was entirely alien to me, and the personalities on the set were likewise . . ." Thesiger had a way of insinuating things that, at the time, deliberately had to be left unsaid. Critic Michael Willhoite noted of his Dr. Pretorius, "He handles that cigar as if it were a dildo he might just transmogrify into a butterfly."

Alec Guinness, in whose classic *THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT* (1951) Thesiger appeared, opined, "I have always had less personality than the average actor . . . Ernest Thesiger has, if anything, too much personality for an actor. Both circumstances are considered unadvantageous, commercially speaking."

In 1927, the personality-full Ernest Thesiger had already published his memoirs, gleefully stating that he had charged people 50 pounds sterling for a mention in the book—and 75 pounds to be left out! As he aged, however, he became less outrageous and more disapproving. Wrote author Hilary Spurling, he was "growing more and more like Queen Mary with his pursed lips and bolt upright bearing, his censorious dowager's air and crushing line in regal retorts." (Thesiger would have been perfectly cast as Lady Bracknell in *THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST*—or Baroness Meinster in 1960's *THE BRIDES OF DRACULA*.) Still, there were occasional splashes of the old color. During the drab fifties, Thesiger would turn up for stage rehearsals in a pink linen smock! He would rhapsodize

over the old days. One day, a younger actor informed him, "That sort of thing is considered definitely ham."

"I'm well aware of it," Thesiger replied, "but you may as well know that I consider the type of acting that you advocate as definitely Spam."

In 1959 he celebrated 50 years on the stage, and the following year was appointed C.B.E. Among other honors, his painting "Ruins of Old Chelsea Church" hangs in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and he is forever to be seen in the 1945 masterpiece *HENRY V* via director-star Laurence Olivier, who once mused, "Ernest Thesiger always dresses up any presentation." When Chelsea Church was restored in 1958, it included two embroidered kneelers by Thesiger, one of them commemorating Henry Patenson, Sir Thomas Moore's jester, "A Man of Special Wit," pictured in the costume of the time with cap and bells.

Sir Cecil Beaton, who photographed Thesiger, felt, "Most of Ernest's gainful employment was upon the stage or in motion pictures of historical or horrific aspect. He often said that he was born too late, that he'd rather have lived a century or two before."

Yet as a gay man, he lived before the emergence of gay civil rights, and though he was in the closet so far as having a wife, he now seems to have been flamboyantly "out" in terms of his manner, his clothes, and many of his hobbies (one favorite getup was blue velvet shorts with a matching silk shirt and muffler).

Quentin Crisp explains, however: "A man could dress and behave as outrageously as he wished, within limits, so long as he had a sweetheart or a wife in the near background. Not that he need be passionately interested in her, but she was a necessary accessory to his allowing himself such startling self-expression." In other words, the outre Thesiger was definitely "in." Why the supposed marriage, if his physical type was so uncommercial, even on the stage?

Michael Ellman's *The Pink Plaque Guide to London* (GMP, 1986) claims Thesiger and Willie Ranken had always taken "very public walks in the park, wearing small bouquets of flowers, rather than a single bud, in their button-holes," then a shocking thing to

do. The book asserts that "The marriage [between Ernest and Janette] seems to have been founded upon a mutual adoration of Willie and was never consummated. Janette was in love with Margaret Jourdain, who dedicated her *Poems* (1911) to her." Possibly the alleged marriage was a way of staying ever close to Willie without public scandal; clearly Thesiger sought to shock, but a scandal could topple even such a cultural VIP as Oscar Wilde—whose marriage failed to keep British homophobia at bay.

Ernest Thesiger was active up to the last. Janette was bedridden and became a chronic invalid (long-lived), but a few weeks before his sudden death, Thesiger had been on stage with Gielgud. Thesiger died in his sleep. Wrote Cecil Beaton, "Were acting a business less dedicated to archetypes and more given over to personality and individuality, Ernest Thesiger would have been a star . . . He was as individual, and as aesthetic, as a magnified snowflake."

But far less delicate. And infinitely thornier!



"He bears a certain resemblance to me, don't you think? Or do I flatter myself?" Dr. Pretorius (Ernest Thesiger) admires his Little Devil (Peter Shaw) in *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1935)



To the sound of scattered applause, Elsa Lanchester is led to the set of *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* in full makeup as the Monster's Mate for the first time. "My God!" cries Ernest Thesiger, seeing her. "Is the audience to presume that Colin and I have done her hair? I thought we were mad scientists, not hair-dressers!"

"Only a man could have done this to a woman," complains Lanchester as director James Whale leads her to the standing board-operating table of her supposed creation. Whale calls for leading man Colin Clive, whispering to Thesiger, "How is he today." "Stiff as a board," mutters Thesiger matter of factly, before calling out to Clive himself, "Yes, Colin, come see what they've done to our Elsa! I gather we not only did her hair, but dressed her! What a couple of queens we are, Colin!"

"Yes, that's right—a couple of flaming queens," agrees Whale, explaining, "Pretorius is a little bit in love with Dr. Frankenstein, you know? Hmm?"

A backstage moment from the filming of James Whale's 1935 horror film masterpiece, *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*? Not precisely. Rather, this is a scene from *GODS AND MONSTERS*, writer/director Bill Condon's brilliant film adaptation of Christopher Bram's 1996 *roman à clef* about the last days of James Whale, *Father of Frankenstein*. Yet so perfectly is the scene realized—the casting, the characters, the set, everything—that it might very well be real. It is certainly the most on-the-money cinematic depiction of the creation of a scene from a well-known film anyone has ever attempted.

But more, it *feels* authentic. It seems as if it might have happened just this way, and if it didn't, then perhaps it should have, since Condon's scene so accurately reflects the amazing flood of undercurrents that are *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* and raise it completely out of the realm of a genre work to simply be one of the great films of all time, period.

Four years separate *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* from Whale's original *FRANKENSTEIN* and it certainly wasn't the fault of Universal Pictures, who had wanted a sequel film even before the first one had been released. Whale was having none of it. So far as he was concerned, he had gotten all the good out of the idea in the first film. Moreover, the scripting efforts at *THE RETURN OF FRANKENSTEIN* (as it was then called) had long been less than successful. With typical penny-pinching mindset, the Laemmles first farmed the idea out to a staff writer, rather than spend anything on a major screenwriter. This thankless task fell to Tim Reed, whose script actually was announced for production with Kurt Neumann (who had just successfully made Universal's minor 1933 thriller, *SECRET OF THE BLUE ROOM*) at the helm.

But Carl Laemmle Jr. wanted James Whale back for the sequel. Junior wanted Whale and Junior had something that Whale wanted—the power to say, "Yes," to Whale's project of filming John Galsworthy's novel, *One More River*. The price was, of course, that Whale, against his better judgment, would make the new Frankenstein picture. But at least, Whale took heart in that it would be a horror film on his terms. He quickly rejected Reed's script, before also

giving thumbs down to efforts by L. G. Blochman and Philip MacDonald. Opting to change the title to *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, his next move was to bring in genre specialist John L. Balderston, but even Balderston's efforts were not to Whale's liking. Balderston was replaced by

William Hurlbut, whose work was then added to and subtracted from by Edmund Pearson. In the end, Hurlbut would receive sole screenplay credit and share the nebulous "adaptation by" credit with Balderston. Whale was reasonably satisfied. It was, he knew, a script with which he could create the film he wanted—something that would meet the studio requirements (which were little more than a James Whale Frankenstein picture starring Boris Karloff that could be promoted as such) and yet afford him the opportunity to do something so completely different that it still seems to push the envelope 60-odd years later. While the resulting film is clearly meant to connect with *FRANKENSTEIN*, it is utterly different in tone from the onset. *FRANKENSTEIN*, despite its occasional forays into Whale's own peculiar sense of humor, had been an almost entirely grim, serious work. *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* was not. Whale wanted to create a complete fantasy world in excess of even his usual stylization, and then to place within that world the most astonishing black comedy ever seen. At this, he was



remarkably successful, but how much of his creation he completely understood himself is open to question. (Whale would certainly be neither the first nor the last artist to tell more about himself than he ever intended in his work.) Somewhere within that fabricated world and that black comic fantasy of his creation, he also created a work of powerful emotionalism, genuine thrills, further exploration of his own character, and quite possibly the best film of his career.

The first thing that emerges from a detailed study of *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* is that it almost certainly holds the distinction of being the best-loved, most respected and admired sloppy film of all time! For once, Whale's penchant for shooting in such a way that the film could only be cut together one way—his way—and his remarkable lack of concern over continuity caught up with him. Characters appear to literally pop in and out of rooms and change positions from master shot to medium shot to close shot. Post-production cuts obscure some motivations and, in one case, leave a line of dialogue perplexingly meaningless. Moreover, the late production work (when Whale relented and allowed his leading man to live after the climax had already been shot) provides the unique experience of seeing Henry Frankenstein flee the laboratory with wife Elizabeth (Valerie Hobson) just prior to its destruction, followed by shots of the laboratory exploding with Henry very much still in residence! And yet no one complains. No one even questions these gaffs. Why? Very simply, it is that the film is in no way diminished by any of this—something that cannot be wholly explained. With die-hard genre enthusiasts it is almost certainly a case of winking at the errors with a sense of "Oh, that's just Jimmy," making it a kind of friendly plus. But in a broader sense, true personal works of unbridled,



The Bride Came

C.O.L.D.

by Ken
Hanke



unfettered genius are so rare within the confines of commercial filmmaking that it does not even require charity to overlook BRIDE's many flaws. Its poetry, its sense of theater, its bizarre humor, its

performances, its visual beauty, its bitterness and anger, its tenderness and understanding—all these override any questions of technical slickness.

In structuring BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, Whale seems to have instinctively realized that, in order not to jar too much with the original, it would be necessary to somehow distance the new picture from its famous parent. This



was deftly accomplished by the utilization of an "historical prologue" featuring Mary Shelley (Elsa Lanchester), Percy Shelley (Douglas Walton), and Lord Byron (Gavin Gordon) discussing Mary's novel on a stormy evening. If anyone had entertained notions (even after Whale's unique and amusingly bombastic directorial credit, with his name flying out from the background accompanied by a triumphant cymbal crash!) that BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN was just another horror picture, this prologue set that notion to rest at once. Since it was now a subjective representation of the story from Mary's point of view ("But that wasn't the end at all. Would you like to know what happened after that?"), any stylistic discrepancies could be swept aside. More important, it establishes the film as a witty conceit. Even the presentation of scenes from the first film as being part of Mary's novel is something of an inside joke, since so little of that film has anything to do with her book. Also, it establishes Mary Shelley as an alter ego of sorts for James Whale in their respective creative capacities, in that she at first is reluctant even to be reminded of her novel and then decides she feels "like telling it tonight," neatly mirroring Whale's own decision to finally make a sequel. And it paves the way for Whale's ultimate conceit and the best joke of all—presenting the Monster's Mate and Mary Shelley as one and the same!

That the prologue itself is a conceit is driven home by the fact that it is so oversized, so outrageously melodramatic in both concept and realization. The historical personages here are not even roughly designed to depict reality. Rather they are the Shelleys and Byron as if they had been created by James Whale and they behave accordingly. (For that matter, the trio are something of the joke at the end of a shaggy Whale story—a camera dolly in on a mysterious castle in the midst of a raging thunderstorm only to reveal these very civilized and non-horrific characters inside.) Whale, of course, would want them in perfect clothing, in sumptuous trappings, surrounded by every luxury (with just a hint of decadence, of course), and behaving exactly as if they were already fully aware of their status as historical characters of some note. The sequence as originally shot was apparently longer and more detailed, but fell prey (as did several other incidents) to considerations of time and the censor (things Whale could have stated outright in 1931 could not even be hinted at in 1935 under the new production code, and this seems to have particularly pertained to the living arrangements in the Shelley ménage!).

Once Whale dissolves from the stock footage of the mill burning to the newly matched footage of the mill burning, he loses no time establishing the film's symbolism. In this very first shot, tracking through the crowd and past the



charred remnants of the mill, he thrusts the film's deep and curiously despairing Christian symbolism directly at us in the burning timbers shaped like crosses, which topple to the delighted cries of the mob. The Christian symbolism that had only been implied in FRANKENSTEIN has here become explicit. As one might expect, and as we shall see, it is a quirky, extremely personal stripe of Christianity. Even so, it becomes inescapably moving and even devout in its intensity and its fidelity to itself—a very interesting aspect of a work from a man said to have held no special religious convictions.

If the delighted screams of the crowd at the fire's occasional flare-ups and the toppling crosses haven't made it perfectly clear that their mood and Whale's view of them have appreciably altered since the first film, the first line of dialogue leaves no room for doubt. Not surprisingly, it is left to Una O'Connor as the Frankenstein maid Minnie, a role tailored to her unique comic talents, to be the representative of that shift in tone. "Well, I must say," she cries out to no one in particular, "that's the best fire I ever saw in all me life!" For Whale, the next interesting character is the Burgomaster (played with comic pomposity by E. E. Clive), whose only concern in the matter seems to be exercising his authority. He even goes so far with the Burgomaster as to have him become a foil for Minnie, with whom he unwisely attempts to reason and establish his authority. Minnie will have none of it. As soon as there is another burst of flame, she happily proclaims, "There it goes again! It ain't burned out at all! There's more yet," ultimately adding the helpful piece of scientific analysis, "It's his insides caught at last—insides is always the last to be consumed." The most telling line of all, though, is given to the Burgomaster, summing up Whale's attitude toward the crowd on the whole—"Move on. You've had enough excitement for one evening." This dismissal of the crowd not only underlines Whale's approach to the drama as theatrical event, but guarantees that the film is on to the villagers' real motivations behind their exercise of civic duty—it's all a kind of grand entertainment. The villagers had been depicted as rather dull-witted, but heroic in the first film. Now, the question arises as to whether they may not be the true villains. The attitude also says something about us as viewers, for are we not just more intellectualized versions of the villagers? Aren't we here in part for the excitement of the mayhem and destruction?

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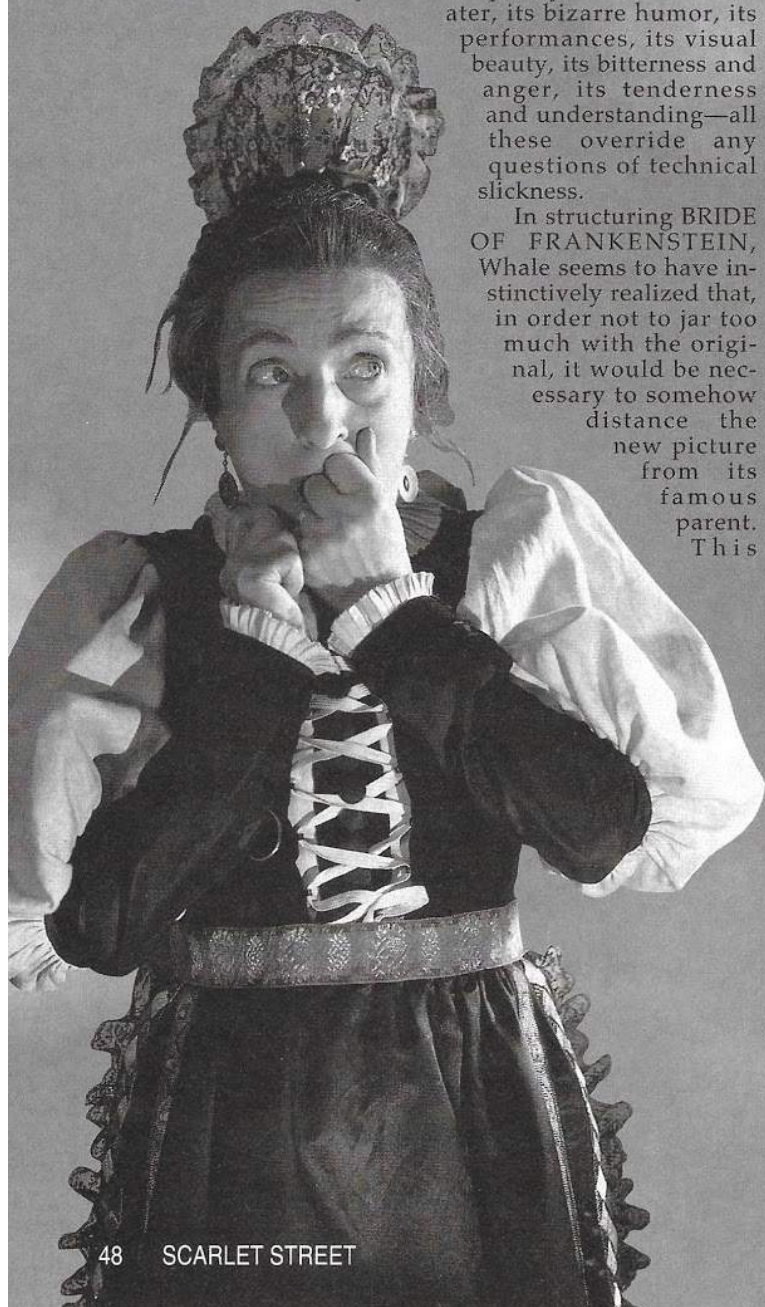
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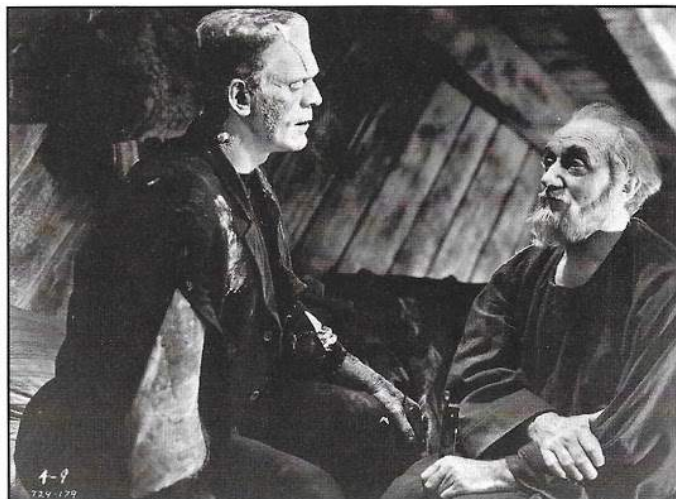
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LEFT: The Monster's unfortunate encounter with a frightened shepherdess (Anne Darling) presages his disastrous "wedding night." **RIGHT:** So perfect is *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*'s sequence with the blind hermit (O. P. Heggie) that it easily weathered the affectionate ribbing it took in Mel Brooks' *YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN* (1974).

to deliver the goods in his horror film, and so he does, but not without registering his own silent boredom with and protest of the necessity of doing this before getting on with more important matters. Simply, Whale undermines the scene's horror by cutting away to the response of one very bored spectator, an owl who only barely opens his eyes at the ruckus. For Whale, this obligatory horror action is far less interesting than the very real horror of the mob at the opening. The Monster's actions, after all, are far less nasty than Minnie's sick satisfaction at his supposed destruction. At least what the Monster does is grounded in the logic of what has been done to him, Minnie is merely bloodthirsty and cruel.

Again, Whale undercuts his next horror in the same way. When the murdered man's wife (Mary Gordon) helps the Monster from the cistern (thinking she has hold of her husband Hans' hand), she is pitched headlong down the steps for her error. Like the owl he again cuts to, Whale seems personally unaffected by the casual mayhem.

Whale immediately shifts back to the comic with the Monster's nonlethal encounter with the still loitering Minnie, before getting to one of the most beautiful sequences he ever filmed, Henry Frankenstein's "funeral" procession to the castle. The sequence begins with policemen on horseback galloping across the bridge to the castle (changed from the stately manor house of *FRANKENSTEIN* to a genuine castle here) backed by the night sky.

Whale cuts to a high-angle long shot as they enter the courtyard, and then, in the subsequent shot of Elizabeth watching from a balcony above, shows this shot to have been from her point of view. Next comes a reprise of the opening shot, as Henry's funeral bier is carried across the same bridge. The almost Wagnerian stateliness of this (aided immeasurably by Waxman's admittedly more Mahlerian than Wagnerian funeral march) is unsurpassed. Whale tracks his camera around and in on the policemen knocking at the castle door and then ringing the bell in desperation at the slowness of the response of the household—an action he will mirror once Henry is brought inside. Almost perversely, Whale shatters the dignity of the whole thing by the introduction of Minnie, still screaming from her encounter with the Monster, entering in identical shots to those of the procession. The last vestiges of propriety are destroyed when she tries to explain that the Monster is still alive and her fear turns to righteous indignation when she isn't believed. ("Nobody'll believe me! All right, I wash me hands of it. Let 'em all be murdered in their beds, for all of me!")

And back Whale shifts to the stately, cutting to the inside of the castle with the music rising on the soundtrack. Whale dollies his camera around in an arc as Henry is laid out on a table (which first has to be cleared of provisions for the interrupted wedding festivities), neatly creating a unique giddy quality in the fusion of styles and visual

LEFT: *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*'s religious symbolism reaches its apogee in the scenes between the Monster and the blind hermit. Here, to the strains of the "Ave Maria," Heggie prays, Karloff weeps, and the crucifix glows benignly. **RIGHT:** Two hunters (John Carradine and Robert Adair) destroy the Monster's only successful relationship.



symmetry with the shot at the door. That this is pure theatricalism is apparent in the use of the castle architecture as a series of proscenium arches framing the action. Even Elizabeth's initial response to seeing her betrothed lying in state is purely theatrical—"I was foretold of this. I was told beware my wedding night"—an intriguing bit of self-dramatization that can be read any number of ways.

Whale has his reasons for presenting all this as he has done. He knows—and he knows we know—that Henry isn't dead as presumed and that all this is a mock funeral and not to be taken seriously. And as soon as Elizabeth is being led away, he has Henry return to life in an action that parallels the awakening of the Monster in the first film. Henry's arm moves, provoking a scream from Minnie and the announcement (again paralleling FRANKENSTEIN), "Oh, look, m'lady! He's alive!" Whale is almost certainly poking fun at Henry's more serious hysteria in the original film, but the point goes much deeper in equating him with his creation—for this time Henry is to be as much the victim as the Monster. The sequence climaxes on a singular note. Minnie, who was joyously exuberant over the death and destruction at the film's opening, opts for a good cry at the revelation that Henry isn't dead at all. It's a strange world Whale has created here . . .

Just exactly what the living arrangements are at Castle Frankenstein is not made very clear in the next scene, which finds Elizabeth readying herself for bed in the same room where Henry is convalescing. The sequence itself is largely developmental, but Whale is not one to toss something off or throw it away. Every moment is beautifully designed in a flow of motion and editing—the languorous tracking shot with Elizabeth to the bedside, the trademark Whalean composition backed by latticed windows and patterns of light, the unusually large closeups, etc.

Elizabeth has changed very little from the first film (except in appearance, Hobson having replaced Mae Clarke) and has apparently learned nothing from her experiences. She still wants to settle things by ignoring them and running from them—"As soon as you're well, we'll go away and forget all this horrible experience." Henry is rather more changed. If anything he is even more neurotic than before, though, to some degree this probably reflects the descent of Colin Clive into a world of his own personal demons and alcoholism. His performance here is so edgy and over the top that the viewer is apt to be more worried about Clive than his character, but the film without Clive was unthinkable. Not only was he the essential Frankenstein, but his lot was so inextricably linked with Whale's—the director had cast him in the first big success for both of them, the 1928 stage play JOURNEY'S END, had used him in the 1930 film of that play, in FRANKENSTEIN, and in ONE MORE RIVER (1934)—that Whale would never have had the heart to give the part to anyone else. As a character, Henry has altered a bit, too, being repentant (though possibly less so than he tries to convince himself) for his actions—"Forget! If only I could forget, but it's never out of my mind. I've been cursed for delving into the mysteries of life. Perhaps death is sacred and I pro-

faned it. Oh, what a wonderful vision it was. I dreamed of being the first to create a man—and I did! I did it. I created a man, and who knows, in time I could have trained him to do my will. I might even have found the secret of eternal life." It takes little to set off his megalomania and he's soon ready to be God again—or at least get on even footing with Him, thinking that he was even possibly meant to do all this as part of the "Divine Plan." "No, no," Elizabeth warns, "it's the devil that prompts you. It's death not life that is in it all and at the end of it all!" Her speech neatly builds to hysteria as she prattles about "a figure like death" coming for Henry, culminating with her interruption by the arrival of a visitor who neatly doubles as just that, as well as the devil that prompts Henry.

The visitor is indeed a "figure like death," and just possibly the devil himself—Dr. Septimus Pretorius, a most fantastically creature written expressly for Whale's impossibly snobbish, campy, and openly gay friend, Ernest Thesiger (whose hobby of needlepoint inspired him, according to Whale biographer James Curtis, to call himself the "Stitchin' Bitch"). In some ways, the character is an outgrowth of Thesiger's Horace Femm in THE OLD DARK HOUSE (1932), but Pretorius is more complex, less wholly comic, and serves a somewhat different function.

As already mentioned, the allegorical implications of BRIDE are more overt than those of its parent. The addition of Dr. Pretorius as the personification of evil brings this more into focus. In FRANKENSTEIN, the conflict between good and evil was largely within Henry himself (with a partial alter ego of evil in Fritz), and the conflict between Henry and the Monster was that of God and His Creation. Pretorius, on the other hand, is the darkest part of Henry. Henry has become God by creating life, making that darkest part the devil—and, like the devil in Christianity, this devil wants equality with God. This becomes abundantly clear very quickly. (What doesn't become clear for some time is the extent to which Whale will take BRIDE as religious allegory.)

The figure of Pretorius in the windswept night is menacing enough, but Whale links him with the coming of death by having him knock first and then ring the bell impatiently, exactly as the policeman bringing the news of Henry's "death" had done. Whale gives us our first good look at him as Minnie opens the door, slowly revealing his face in close shot as the light falls on it (with Waxman's Pretorius theme building on the soundtrack). The effective use of low-angle lighting gives him a Satanic look, while his relative height affords him a position of power. His first instructions, "Tell him that Dr. Pretorius is here on a secret matter of grave importance, and must see him alone—tonight," are delivered in one masterful shot as he pushes his way into the castle in a low-angled, ever growing, ever more demonically lit close shot. If we compare his introduction to that of the Monster at the beginning (which was very nearly off-handed), it is obvious whom Whale considers the more frightening of the two. As elsewhere, though, Whale cannot keep a straight face for long—there's the obvious pun of "a secret matter of grave importance," which Minnie



The Man and his Monster (Colin Clive and Boris Karloff) take a cigarette and coffee break from the rigors of filming the greatest of all fright films: BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1935).



translates into the equally punny "secret grave matter." And Minnie's fear of Pretorius never quite replaces her feeling of superiority over him in her position as a member of the Frankenstein household, slightly undercutting his menace.

Pretorius' entrance into Henry's bedroom is a gem of pure theater, with an ominous swelling in the music and his shadow looming on the wall behind him. Emphasizing his satanic nature, Whale cuts to a medium close shot from a low angle of Pretorius backed by the shadows of the fireplace flames on the wall. His first words ("Baron Frankenstein now, I believe"), however, rather undercut the image, affording us a sense of false security. "I trust you will pardon this intrusion at so late an hour. I would not have ventured to come had I not a communication to make that I suspect may be of the utmost importance to yourself," he continues. This little speech is delivered during a tracking shot that ends with Pretorius flanked by a vase of funereal lilies on one side and the flickering flames on the other, and the movement plainly follows the path of the "figure like death" Elizabeth spoke of coming for Henry. Attempting to preserve convention, Henry introduces Pretorius to Elizabeth—"This is Professor Pretorius. He used to be doctor of philosophy at the university, but . . . uh . . ." Pretorius, completely uninterested in pleasantries and euphemistic glossing-over, finishes the introduction: "But was booted out—booted, my dear Baron, is the word—for knowing too much." (It would not be going too far to read this as a reference to the devil's fall from heaven.)

Continuing to expand on his social gracelessness, Pretorius dismisses Elizabeth (whom he never regards with-

out sneering) by noting, "My business with you, Baron, is private!" (Her parting aside, "I do hope he won't upset Henry," seems remarkably dim considering her own lack of concern during her recent outburst of hysterics!)

With Elizabeth out of the way, Henry, too, drops the social amenities and flat out asks, "What do you want?" What his former teacher wants, of course, is to reinterest Henry in his experiments—something that is not too difficult when one considers that, despite protestations to the contrary, Henry never really lost interest in them. Pretorius' first approach is blackmail: "You know, do you not, that is you really who are responsible for all those murders. There are penalties to pay for killing people, and with your creature still at large in the countryside . . ." (It is never explained how the old devil knows that the Monster is still at large, or whether he in fact does know, and Henry never protests that his creation died in the burning mill.) But blackmail isn't yet necessary: Pretorius is really there to tempt Henry into going back to work. "I also have continued with my experiments. That is why I am here tonight. You must see my experiments!" enthuses Pretorius, bringing Henry's scientific curiosity to a point where it overcomes his never-too-strong reformation. Immediately the pair are off to Pretorius's Caligari-esque rooms, where Henry is shown the results of his teacher's efforts.

In what is doubtless the most peculiar sequence in the film, Pretorius, first playing at being host by offering refreshment ("Do you like gin? It's my only weakness") and toasting their venture ("To a new world of gods and monsters!"), then mystifyingly donning a yarmulke (a jab at Universal's Jewish owners? a peculiar implication that for

Pretorius his laboratory is the house of God?), trots out his singular creations, all housed in a display case—a group of perfectly formed homunculi (all perfectly costumed—a consideration that suggests a sly in-joke about Thesiger's sewing skills), no more than 10 to 12 inches high, housed in glass jars. "There is a pleasing variety about my experiments," he announces, showing off a prim queen, a lecherous king, a disapproving archbishop, a mermaid ("an experiment with seaweed"), the devil ("he bears a certain resemblance to me, don't you think? Or do I flatter myself?"), and a ballerina ("charming, but such a bore—she won't dance to anything but Mendelssohn's 'Spring Song'"). More horrified than intrigued by the flea circus, Henry objects, "But this isn't science, it's more like black magic!" This assessment does little to dissuade Pretorius, who comes to the point—"Leave the charnel house and follow the lead of nature—or God, if you like your Bible stories—male and female created he them. Be fruitful and multiply. Create a race—a man-made race upon the face of the earth. Why not?" Over Henry's refusal to even consider this scheme, Pretorius offers the full plan, telling him, "Alone you have created a man. Now together we will create his mate." Henry is both fascinated and repelled by the notion, superfluously asking, "You mean?" "Yes," confirms his would-be partner, "a woman. That should be really interesting!" The scene fades with the music we will come to know as the Bride's theme on the soundtrack.

So used are we in this day and age to *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* that on the whole we fail to notice its unusual structure. (Part of the curse—and glory—of James Whale's work is that it is so visually fascinating and so permeated with his unique sense of humor that his larger contributions—such as thematic consistency and daring structure—are often completely overlooked.) As a rule, horror films tend to move in a fairly straightforward line of story progression. Not so *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. Despite the appearance of the Monster in the film's first reel, he has, by the conclusion of the homunculi sequence, been offscreen for a considerable period of time; the film has belonged to Henry and Pretorius. In truth, thus far the film has been in a developmental stage, albeit one so well constructed and so full of incident that it is not recognized as such. With the reintroduction of the Monster at this point in the narrative, the surprise is that the film is *still* developmental. In fact, *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* is nearly all development, leading up to the creation of the Monster's Mate at the climax. Whale must have sensed that, as fine as *FRANKENSTEIN* was as a film, its most impressive and spectacular scene (the creation of the Monster) had, by necessity, occurred before the film's halfway mark. *BRIDE* was daring since we had already seen the creation of a Monster in the first film and Whale would have to top that, but in running this risk, Whale assured himself one of the most memorable climaxes in the history of film.

Having planted the idea of the creation of a mate for Henry's creation, Whale shifts gears to see how that first creation has fared. We pick up on the Monster in a tracking shot through a forest and follow him until he comes to a waterfall with a mountain pool, from which he drinks. When the Monster reacts in anger and self-loathing on seeing his own visage reflected in the water (a sequence repeated at greater length and to lesser effect with a mirror in 1939's *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN*), it is apparent that we are a long way from the concerns of *FRANKENSTEIN*.

Of course, having been away from the Monster we have also been out of the realm of traditional horror, so, largely to appease the dictates of the studio and its idea of Whale's film, horror reenters the proceedings here in an obligatory manner. The Monster spots a shepherdess standing at the top of the hill above the pool, with whom he ill-advisedly tries to be friendly. His attempts only frighten her into losing her footing and falling into the

water, where he saves her from drowning. For his pains, she screams in his face, summoning a pair of hunters who shoot him in the arm and rush off to inform the Burgomaster. It is pretty stock stuff on the surface. It takes a filmmaker of Whale's brilliance to make it otherwise. His attitude toward the content of the scene is once again summed up by cutting away to the reactions of animals, in this case sheep that produce a resounding "Bah!" at their mistress' reaction to the Monster. Moreover, the scene is firmly woven not only into this film (it presages the terrible wedding night of the Monster and his Mate), but to the first film and the drowning of Little Maria. Here the Monster actually *saves* someone from drowning, but he is treated no better for it than if he had drowned her. Further, Whale uses this segment to build to a scene of genuine horror—not caused *by*, but perpetrated *upon* the Monster.

The villagers who are summoned to track down the Monster bear little relation to those from the previous film. (Despite the Burgomaster's order to "lock the women indoors," which doesn't happen since a great many women—including Minnie—show up in the woods, there is little indication that the townsfolk themselves are in any danger.) This is not a group of men with a mission to accomplish no matter how distasteful, this is, in essence, a lynch mob. Indeed, many of their actions are remarkably similar to those of the lynch mob in Fritz Lang's *FURY*, made the following year.

The pursuit of the Monster is staged in a series of lateral tracking shots, again through a forest, but not the idyllic woodland of his encounter with the shepherdess. Rather, this is a remarkably barren place, with trees that are but straight trunks, without leaves or branches, reaching up beyond the frame of the film. The effect is that of a prison, which is exactly what the forest is for the Monster. These woods do not even provide him the opportunity of hiding in their unfriendly bareness (something even the mountain crags offered in *FRANKENSTEIN*). What had been an heroic pursuit of a killer in the first film is here completely devoid of heroism. There is no personalized horror for the villagers here. There are too many of them for that and they never get separated. The Monster is reduced to pathetically hiding behind a rock on a small hill—a rock that is far too small to conceal him in any case. Even when he pushes this boulder onto a pair of policemen, there is little sense of him having done wrong—he has merely reacted in the only fashion left open to him.

Owing to their great number, the villagers have little trouble subduing their quarry. The only townspeople given any individuality are the Burgomaster, Minnie, and Dwight Frye's Karl, who is introduced leaning against a tree, indolently watching the spectacle. Whale shrewdly characterizes them to his own ends. Karl (who turns out to be a particularly conscienceless murderer) nonchalantly points out the location of the Monster (buried under a pile of villagers) to the late-arriving Burgomaster. Once the Burgomaster appears, his concern, as before, is entirely in vainly trying to establish his authority. "Bind him securely. I don't want anything slipshod. Tie his feet first! His feet first! I get no cooperation—none at all!" Minnie then arrives to add her particular blood-thirsty interest to the proceedings, viciously crying out, in a terrifyingly maniacal close shot, "You want any help there, I'll bind him!"

It is at this point that Whale establishes his most daring symbolism—the Monster as Christ figure—as the villagers raise him in the air, trussed up on a pole crucifixion style, and cheer wildly as they pelt him with rocks. As they had done with the burning crucifix timbers at the beginning of the film, the crowd cheers in approval as they topple the Monster into the wagon to take him to prison.

Whale is not being merely willful in his presentation here. After all, on one level it is perfectly logical that the Monster should be viewed in this light, considering the

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godlike status of his creator, who has indeed forsaken him. More importantly, however, the villagers here are making a mockery of their own presumed Christian principles in their actions.

The Monster's stay in jail is remarkably brief. No sooner is he chained to a huge chair in the "old dungeon" (miscreants must have been rather large in the days of the old dungeon) than he breaks loose and crashes out of jail in a fury, nicely demolishing several doors and everyone's superior attitude. "Just an escaped lunatic. Merely wanted someone to handle it, that's all—quite harmless," claims the Burgomaster just as the Monster barges into the street, sending everyone—including the pompous Burgomaster—running in terror.

The Monster's reign of terror in the village seems a little perfunctory (though this may partly be the result of postproduction tampering, since at least one subplot involving Karl murdering his uncle and pinning the crime on the hapless Monster is now completely missing). Again, Whale evidences little real interest in this obligatory mayhem, though he handles it with a good deal of panache and

a nicely judged sense of the Monster being virtually everywhere at once, with dead and injured citizens turning up all over town. Even so, the real sense of terror is deliberately downplayed. It is, after all, difficult to feel any great fear with Minnie standing about the streets gossiping and having a grand time as the casualty list grows.

Fleeing again to the woods, the Monster indulges in a minor amount of mayhem at a gypsy camp before being lured to a solitary cabin by the sound of violin playing inside. This is the famous encounter

with the blind hermit, and everything about this section of the film is different from the rest of the picture. It is more leisurely. There is little sense of guying the material on Whale's part. Further, Whale here uses background music far more sparingly, limiting it to the hermit's violin and an organ solo of Schubert's "Ave Maria" at the opening and at the scene's emotional high point.

For anyone who knows Whale only from his horror films, this sequence comes as something of a surprise, but a broader view of Whale reveals that the sequences involving the Monster and the hermit are by no means isolated in their emotionalism. (One has only to see the section of 1936's *SHOW BOAT* in which Julie's racially mixed parentage comes to light to grasp what emotional heights Whale was capable of scaling.) What is unique here is its use in a horror film, a genre not usually associated with this degree of emotional depth. (True, there is an emotional force at work in Whale's other horror outings, but the emotion is generally one of outrage.) *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* may well be the only horror film that can bring a tear to the eye.

The encounter with the hermit is built on a central irony. Once the Monster overcomes his understandable fear of any situation that calls for interacting with a human being, he crashes into the cabin in the only way he has come to understand—with a menacing growl. Instead of the hysteria he is so used to receiving, the only response he encounters is a very calm, "Who is it?" from the hermit. Since the Monster cannot speak, he makes a gesture of friendship with his hands—a gesture he has often made before to no avail. Significantly, the hermit, the first person he has encountered who cannot see the gesture, is the first to respond to it! Whale's handling of our first full look at the hermit's sightless eyes is magnificently conveyed, as the old man steps into the light, saying, by way of apology to the Monster, "I cannot see you. I cannot see anything. You must please excuse me, but I'm blind." Whale cuts from this to a close shot of the Monster issuing indecipherable sounds and then pans once again to the pleading hands. Without being able to see the gestures, the hermit nonetheless responds by inviting the Monster inside. He assures him, "No one will hurt you here," and unconsciously follows the action of Henry in the first film by bidding him, "Sit down." Unlike Henry, the hermit asks a perfectly reasonable question that seems never to have occurred to the monster maker, "Who are you?" (The Monster's brain—criminal or not—must have retained some identity!) Of course, the Monster cannot speak, but the hermit is undaunted in his efforts, wondering, "It's strange. Perhaps... perhaps you are afflicted, too. I cannot see and you cannot speak. Is that it?" He instructs his guest to put his hand on his shoulder if he can understand, and succeeds in doing what no one else has ever even tried to do—communicate with and understand the Monster. (No one else, that is, except Whale, who understood what it meant to be different from his fellow man.)

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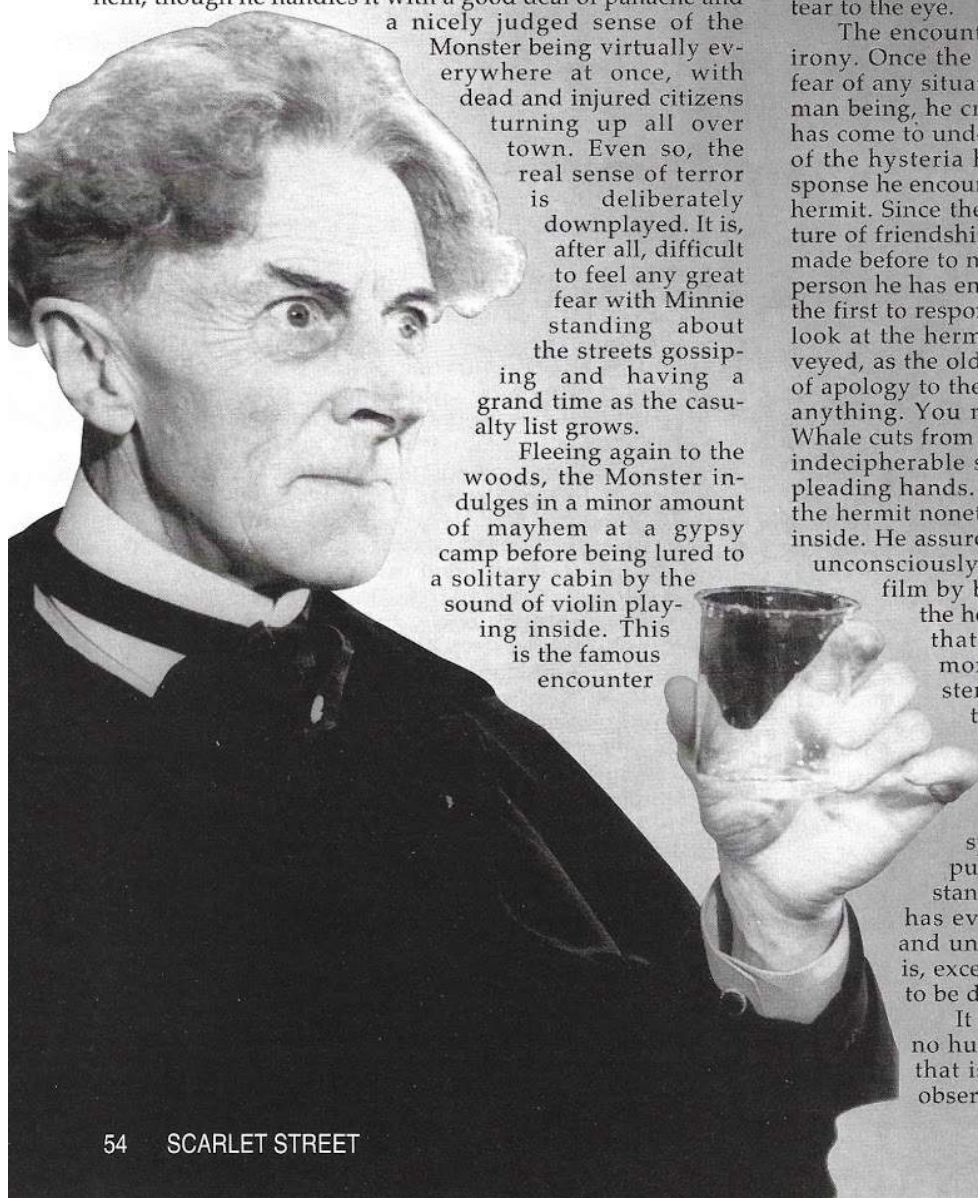
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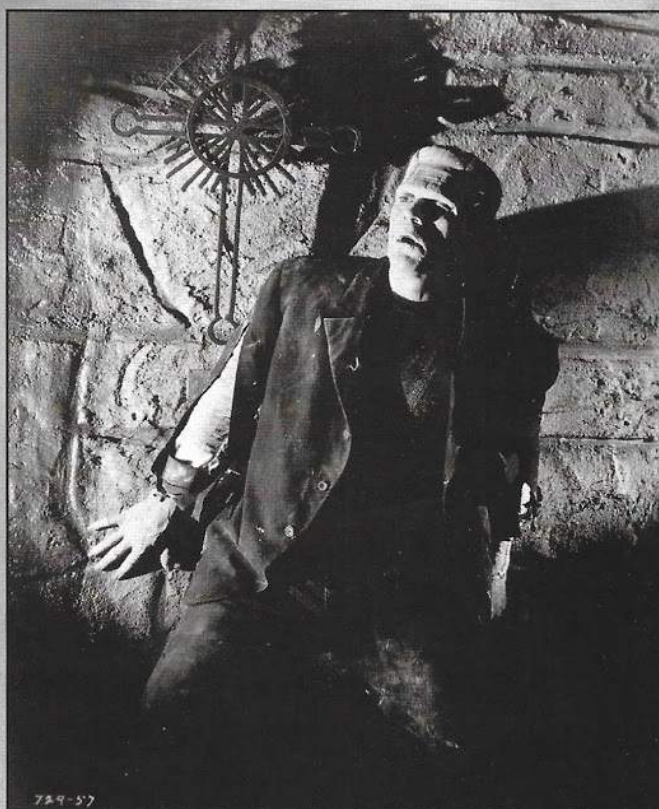




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The humor absent from the previous sequence is given full reign here. Whale takes great delight in cataloging the Monster's appalling table manners and the apparently debilitating effects of his first cigar. But it's all a setup for the intrusion of reality into their cozy little world—with the expected results. Two hunters stop by for directions, see the hermit's companion, and react



accordingly to the announcement of the Monster as the hermit's friend. "Friend? This is the fiend that's been murdering half the countryside! Good heavens, man, can't you see? Oh! He's blind," realizes the first (John Carradine, no less). "He isn't human," adds the other (Robert Adair) helpfully. "Frankenstein made him out of dead bodies!" Surprisingly, the scene plays completely against type. The hermit never doubts his friend. Even after they drag him from the hut after it catches fire during their fracas with the Monster, all he can do is ask, "Why do you do this?" The Monster, himself a pathetic figure of loss and terror, simply runs into the woods, crying, "Friend! Friend!"

Whale underscores the senselessness of what has happened by following it with a brief scene in which the Monster stumbles upon a group of schoolgirls. They run screaming in terror, even though the most menacing thing he has done is to make his dumb appeal for friendship with his hands.

Later, at night, the camera tracks laterally across an old graveyard with the Monster. Angered and disillusioned, he rips down a dead tree, and follows this by toppling a large religious statue, exposing some steps leading to the crypts below. The symbolism connects with FRANKENSTEIN and the Monster's rejection of God, for here, through the placement of a large, already leaning, crucifix in the background of the shot, there is a suggestion (especially since the toppled figure appears to be a bishop—a symbol of man-made religion) that it is not so much God who has deserted him as it is the dictates of the religion of man, which has branded him as less than human. It is significant, when one considers again the perversion of supposed Christian behavior enacted by most of the humans in the film, that the crucifix should be tilted, just as the one on the hermit's wall, the one on which the Monster was toppled, and the crosslike burning timbers of the mill were all crooked, too.

Once in the crypt, the Monster stumbles against a coffin, breaking it open. In one of the most heartbreaking and prophetic images in the film, he passes his hand tenderly over the face of the woman's corpse inside, asking, hopefully, "Friend?" (This moment so offended the British censor, who found it necrophilic, that he cut it out of the print that ran in Great Britain.) Whale does not dwell on the scene, but is satisfied to leave it as an indication of what is to follow.

Interrupted by the sound of someone coming, the Monster hides in the shadows. In a Dickensian coincidence, it turns out to be Pretorius and a pair of decidedly unwilling graverobbers, Karl and Ludwig (Ted Billings), who apparently have been blackmailed into this avocation under threat of murder charges. (Whale sets up his ma-



PAGE 56 LEFT: Dr. Pretorius confronts Henry Frankenstein with the fruits of his labors. PAGE 56 RIGHT: "Can you sleep on your stomach with such big buttons on your pajamas?" The Monster wants a Mate—first his creator's, then one of his own. ABOVE: The creation scene in BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN was the highlight of James Whale's career. RIGHT: "The Bride of Frankenstein!"

jour conceit here by having the body they are pilfering belong to a girl of 19—about the age of Mary Shelley when she wrote *Frankenstein*!) The graveyard humor is not limited to the henchmen. Once the coffin is opened and Karl has noted, "Pretty little thing in her way, wasn't she," the most priceless line is handed to Pretorius, who chimes in tastefully, "I hope her bones are firm!" Even Whale realizes that this cannot be topped and dissolves to the point where they are finishing up and Pretorius opts to stay behind—"I rather like this place!" As soon as Karl and Ludwig are gone, he sets up a jolly little picnic of chicken and wine atop the coffin they have just emptied. Pretorius merrily toasts his centerpiece—a pile of bones topped by a skull—with "I give you the Monster!" (Waxman's score here utilizes a quirky organ piece that manages to convey a sense of macabre humor, while at the same time linking this scene to the one between the Monster and the hermit, making what follows a deliberate and quite unwholesome parody of that relationship.)

As in his encounter with the hermit, the Monster first makes his presence known by stepping out of the shadows and issuing a grunting noise. Much like the hermit, Pretorius is similarly unaffected and simply notes with magnificent sangfroid, "Oh, I thought I was alone. Good evening." Since his approach hasn't produced the expected terror, the Monster chances the question, "Friend?" whereupon Pretorius (not unreasonably, given the circumstances) tells him, "Yes, I hope so," convivially adding, "Have a cigar—they are my only weakness." The scene eschews any vestige of traditional horror and runs along in this coolly comic manner as Pretorius slips into the role of perfect host, moving to the other side of the coffin, serving his guest wine, and chatting happily like the bartender from hell. The Monster, though, is not just being sociable. He's grasped enough of the situation to want to know if Pretorius intends on making a "man like me." "No," explains the not-so-good doctor, leaning in on the coffin confidentially, "woman—friend for you." The idea holds great appeal for the Monster. "I think you can be very useful," Pretorius decides, "and you will add a little force to the argument if necessary. Do you know who Henry Frankenstein is and who you are?" (Whale brings his camera ever closer throughout this exchange, as the importance of the dialogue overrides the humor.) "Yes, I know," confesses the Monster. "Made me from dead. I



love dead, hate living." "You're wise in your generation," Pretorius tells him in admiration, before continuing, "We must have a long talk, and then I have an important call for you to make."

Here, as the "Bride" theme is reintroduced by Waxman, Whale reverts to a long shot across the bones on the coffin toward the Monster holding the skull. The Monster mutters, "Woman. Friend." Whale cuts to a closeup on the word "Wife," followed by a similar closeup on Pretorius, his face a portrait of evil, smiling at this amusing and fortuitous development.

On the whole, the scene is beautifully conveyed and written, and Waxman's score is certainly an asset, but Whale makes most of his points through the application of his own set of cinematic principles. There is an amazing balance in the shot breakdown as medium close shot cuts to medium close shot and closeup to closeup. There is nothing arbitrary about this. Each move serves a definite function. The increasingly close camera placements convey the sense of each character's own self-absorption in the conversation. The Monster is solely interested in obtaining a friend; Pretorius' concern is in using the Monster to his own advantage. The one shot that breaks the pattern—the long shot of the Monster pictured with the bones on the coffin—serves a twofold purpose, linking the Monster to death and to Pretorius, and allowing Whale to give extra import to the concept of the Monster's mate by juxtaposing a long shot with the closeup on the word "wife."

Having brought two-thirds of his unholy three together, it only remains to complete the trio, and Whale wastes no time in doing so. The "important call" is, of course, on Henry, who is packing to leave on his honeymoon when Minnie announces Pretorius's arrival. "There! I knew it!" cries Henry nervously. "Send him away. I won't see him!" No sooner has Minnie delightedly gone off on this mission than Whale cuts to a long shot of the room as Pretorius walks in on his own authority through another door. From the beginning, Pretorius has the upper hand in the scene. He is shot from a low angle, adding to



loff's oft-repeated objection to a speaking part for the Monster. Continuing the character in his dumb incarnation would have made the film's progression extremely difficult, if not downright impossible. Further, as *SON OF FRANKENSTEIN* proved, when Karloff got his wish to have the Monster revert to his nonverbal state, there really wasn't anywhere else to go with the idea.

The humor absent from the previous sequence is given full reign here. Whale takes great delight in cataloguing the Monster's appalling table manners and the apparently debilitating effects of his first cigar. But it's all a setup for the intrusion of reality into their cozy little world—with the expected results. Two hunters stop by for directions, see the hermit's companion, and react



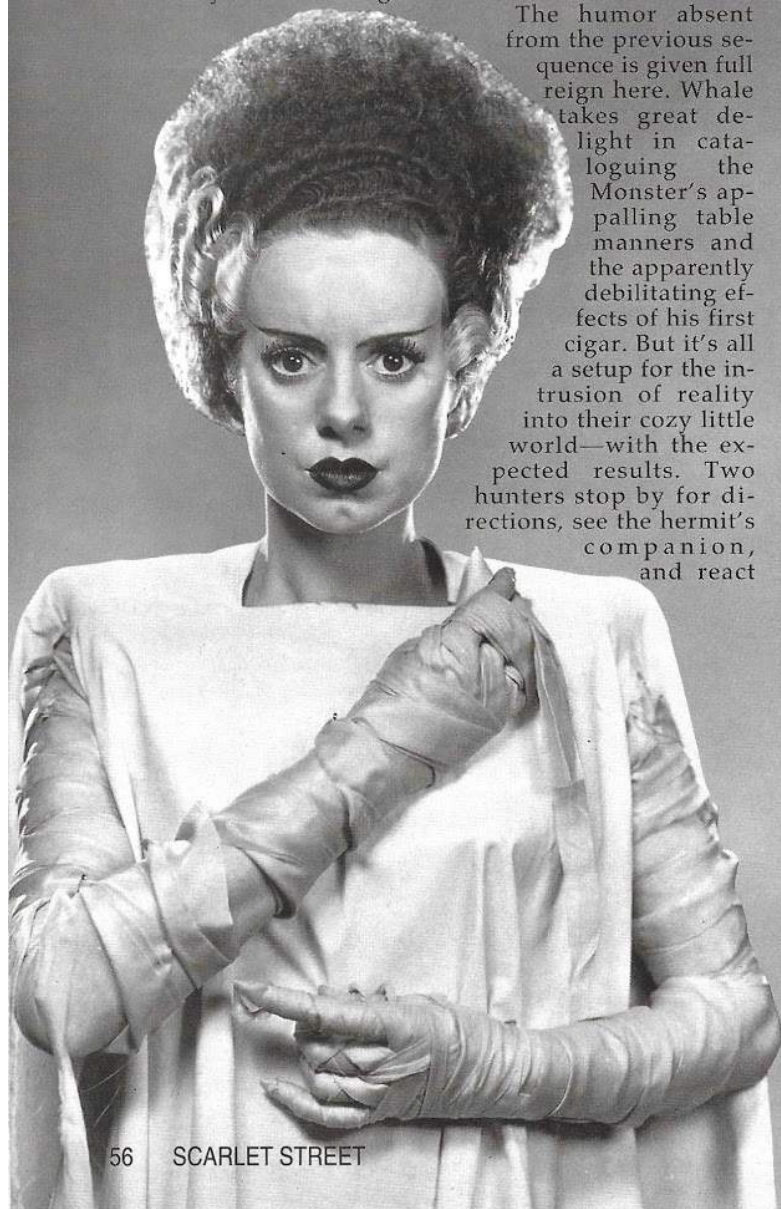
accordingly to the announcement of the Monster as the hermit's friend. "Friend? This is the fiend that's been murdering half the countryside! Good heavens, man, can't you see? Oh! He's blind," realizes the first (John Carradine, no less). "He isn't human," adds the other (Robert Adair) helpfully. "Frankenstein made him out of dead bodies!" Surprisingly, the scene plays completely against type. The hermit never doubts his friend. Even after they drag him from the hut after it catches fire during their fracas with the Monster, all he can do is ask, "Why do you do this?" The Monster, himself a pathetic figure of loss and terror, simply runs into the woods, crying, "Friend! Friend!"

Whale underscores the senselessness of what has happened by following it with a brief scene in which the Monster stumbles upon a group of schoolgirls. They run screaming in terror, even though the most menacing thing he has done is to make his dumb appeal for friendship with his hands.

Later, at night, the camera tracks laterally across an old graveyard with the Monster. Angered and disillusioned, he rips down a dead tree, and follows this by toppling a large religious statue, exposing some steps leading to the crypts below. The symbolism connects with *FRANKENSTEIN* and the Monster's rejection of God, for here, through the placement of a large, already leaning, crucifix in the background of the shot, there is a suggestion (especially since the toppled figure appears to be a bishop—a symbol of man-made religion) that it is not so much God who has deserted him as it is the dictates of the religion of man, which has branded him as less than human. It is significant, when one considers again the perversion of supposed Christian behavior enacted by most of the humans in the film, that the crucifix should be tilted, just as the one on the hermit's wall, the one on which the Monster was toppled, and the crosslike burning timbers of the mill were all crooked, too.

Once in the crypt, the Monster stumbles against a coffin, breaking it open. In one of the most heartbreaking and prophetic images in the film, he passes his hand tenderly over the face of the woman's corpse inside, asking, hopefully, "Friend?" (This moment so offended the British censor, who found it necrophilic, that he cut it out of the print that ran in Great Britain.) Whale does not dwell on the scene, but is satisfied to leave it as an indication of what is to follow.

Interrupted by the sound of someone coming, the Monster hides in the shadows. In a Dickensian coincidence, it turns out to be Pretorius and a pair of decidedly unwilling graverobbers, Karl and Ludwig (Ted Billings), who apparently have been blackmailed into this avocation under threat of murder charges. (Whale sets up his ma-

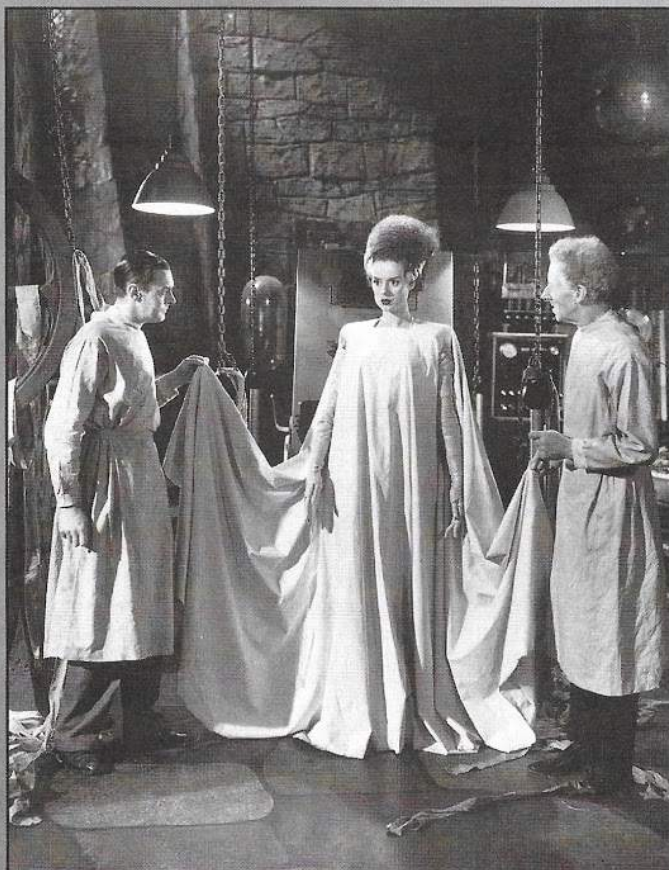




PAGE 56 LEFT: Dr. Pretorius confronts Henry Frankenstein with the fruits of his labors. **PAGE 56 RIGHT:** "Can you sleep on your stomach with such big buttons on your pajamas?" The Monster wants a Mate—first his creator's, then one of his own. **ABOVE:** The creation scene in *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* was the highlight of James Whale's career. **RIGHT:** "The Bride of Frankenstein!"

jor conceit here by having the body they are pilfering belong to a girl of 19—about the age of Mary Shelley when she wrote *Frankenstein*!) The graveyard humor is not limited to the henchmen. Once the coffin is opened and Karl has noted, "Pretty little thing in her way, wasn't she," the most priceless line is handed to Pretorius, who chimes in tastefully, "I hope her bones are firm!" Even Whale realizes that this cannot be topped and dissolves to the point where they are finishing up and Pretorius opts to stay behind—"I rather like this place!" As soon as Karl and Ludwig are gone, he sets up a jolly little picnic of chicken and wine atop the coffin they have just emptied. Pretorius merrily toasts his centerpiece—a pile of bones topped by a skull—with "I give you the Monster!" (Waxman's score here utilizes a quirky organ piece that manages to convey a sense of macabre humor, while at the same time linking this scene to the one between the Monster and the hermit, making what follows a deliberate and quite unwholesome parody of that relationship.)

As in his encounter with the hermit, the Monster first makes his presence known by stepping out of the shadows and issuing a grunting noise. Much like the hermit, Pretorius is similarly unaffected and simply notes with magnificent sangfroid, "Oh. I thought I was alone. Good evening." Since his approach hasn't produced the expected terror, the Monster chances the question, "Friend?" whereupon Pretorius (not unreasonably, given the circumstances) tells him, "Yes, I hope so," convivially adding, "Have a cigar—they are my only weakness." The scene eschews any vestige of traditional horror and runs along in this coolly comic manner as Pretorius slips into the role of perfect host, moving to the other side of the coffin, serving his guest wine, and chatting happily like the bartender from hell. The Monster, though, is not just being sociable. He's grasped enough of the situation to want to know if Pretorius intends on making a "man like me." "No," explains the not-so-good doctor, leaning in on the coffin confidentially, "woman—friend for you." The idea holds great appeal for the Monster. "I think you can be very useful," Pretorius decides, "and you will add a little force to the argument if necessary. Do you know who Henry Frankenstein is and who you are?" (Whale brings his camera ever closer throughout this exchange, as the importance of the dialogue overrides the humor.) "Yes, I know," confesses the Monster. "Made me from dead. I



love dead, hate living." "You're wise in your generation," Pretorius tells him in admiration, before continuing, "We must have a long talk, and then I have an important call for you to make."

Here, as the "Bride" theme is reintroduced by Waxman, Whale reverts to a long shot across the bones on the coffin toward the Monster holding the skull. The Monster mutters, "Woman. Friend." Whale cuts to a closeup on the word "Wife," followed by a similar closeup on Pretorius, his face a portrait of evil, smiling at this amusing and fortuitous development.

On the whole, the scene is beautifully conveyed and written, and Waxman's score is certainly an asset, but Whale makes most of his points through the application of his own set of cinematic principles. There is an amazing balance in the shot breakdown as medium close shot cuts to medium close shot and closeup to closeup. There is nothing arbitrary about this. Each move serves a definite function. The increasingly close camera placements convey the sense of each character's own self-absorption in the conversation. The Monster is solely interested in obtaining a friend; Pretorius' concern is in using the Monster to his own advantage. The one shot that breaks the pattern—the long shot of the Monster pictured with the bones on the coffin—serves a twofold purpose, linking the Monster to death and to Pretorius, and allowing Whale to give extra import to the concept of the Monster's mate by juxtaposing a long shot with the closeup on the word "wife."

Having brought two-thirds of his unholy three together, it only remains to complete the trio, and Whale wastes no time in doing so. The "important call" is, of course, on Henry, who is packing to leave on his honeymoon when Minnie announces Pretorius's arrival. "There! I knew it!" cries Henry nervously. "Send him away. I won't see him!" No sooner has Minnie delightedly gone off on this mission than Whale cuts to a long shot of the room as Pretorius walks in on his own authority through another door. From the beginning, Pretorius has the upper hand in the scene. He is shot from a low angle, adding to



PAGE 58 LEFT: Henry and the deviated Septimus view their handiwork as the Monster, an eager bridegroom, enters. PAGE 58 RIGHT: The Monster meets his Mate. LEFT: It's love at first sight for the Frankenstein Monster, but not for his Bride. BELOW: Dwight Frye contributed one of his most memorable performances to *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. Unfortunately, some of his meatiest scenes wound up on the cutting-room floor.

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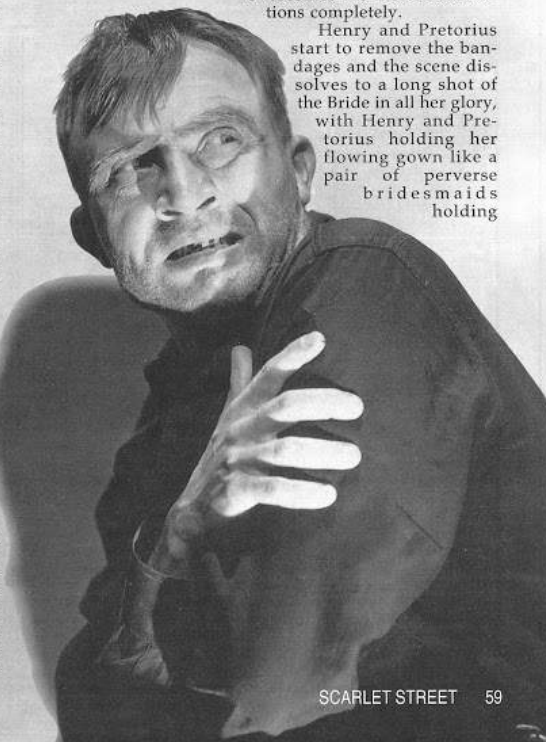
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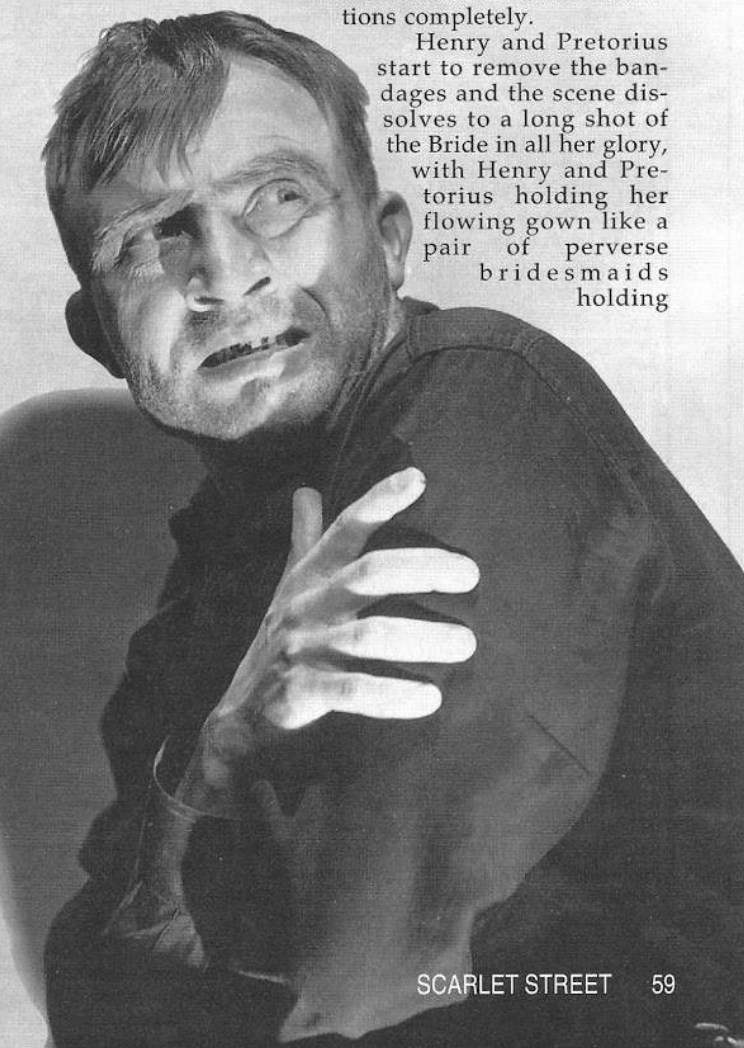
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LEFT: A superb production still of the tormented, alcoholic Colin Clive clutching Elsa Lanchester in the finale of *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. RIGHT: "Don't touch that lever! You'll blow us all to atoms!"



a train. Waxman's timpani beat ominously as Whale stages the usual three-shot breakdown—medium shot, medium closeup, closeup—he employs to introduce villains and monsters. The approach works on two levels: we get the standard monstrous intro (the Jack Pierce makeup was created from a design by Whale and Thesiger based on the Egyptian Queen Nefertiti), but we also see immediately that the Monster's Mate is none other than Mary Shelley! To top it off, Whale cuts to a low-angle on Pretorius, hands outstretched triumphantly, announcing, "The Bride of Frankenstein!" as mock wedding bells peal.

Buried within this matrimonial mockery, though, is an important point: as the bells die, there is a close shot of the Bride as she sees something that attracts her—Henry!

No sooner has this attraction been established than her intended groom, recovered from the "bachelor party" inflicted on him by Pretorius, appears. This, of course, is the film's Big Moment and Whale plays it as such. The Monster takes one look at the Bride and hazards, "Friend?" Whale inserts a closeup of his pleading hands before cutting back to his face—an image as mixed with fear, hopefulness, hopelessness, and longing as that of Chaplin at the end of *CITY LIGHTS* (1931). Unfortunately, the Bride takes one look at the Monster and screams—running to Henry, who leads her over to a couch. The Monster joins her.

Whale mercilessly lampoons the romantic clichés of the Hollywood film as he dollies in to a tight two-shot as the Monster takes his intended's hand. Then, with unbe-

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lievable nerve, he cuts to a soft-focus closeup of her hand being stroked and petted. It is only through the masterful structure of the succeeding shots that Whale does not topple over into the risible, as he quickly alternates close shots of Henry, Pretorius, the Monster, the hands again, and then the Bride as she looks from her "violated" hand up to the Monster. The Monster moves to take her in his arms, at which point Whale cuts to a close shot of the Bride from the Monster's point of view as she recoils, screaming—just as the shepherdess had done. As Henry spirits the female creature away, the Monster comes to the realization, "She hate me, like others."

Outside, Elizabeth arrives on the scene (with no explanation of how she is free), accompanied by sound effects and music that make the Monster's pronouncement seem like a chilling blast of wind.

Approaching Henry and the Bride, the Monster inadvertently comes across a certain apparatus. "Look out!" warns Henry. "The lever!" "Get away from that lever! You'll blow us all to atoms!" Pretorius wastes no time in adding. (Just why such a lever should exist in the first place, let alone be so accessible, is never made clear.) It is here that it is so important that the Monster should have come to terms with the concepts of good and evil through his acquaintance the hermit—otherwise his decision not only to let Henry and Elizabeth go, but that he, Pretorius, and the Bride "belong dead," would simply not make any sense.

Neither Whale, in a complicated series of cuts, nor John P. Fulton's special effects, let us down during the final conflagration. Nevertheless, what remain long after the excitement of the explosions has long vanished are the images of the Bride hissing like a cat and the searing closeup of the Monster sadly shaking his head as a tear rolls down his cheek. It is a powerful climax to what is very likely the finest horror film ever made.

As noted earlier, the decision to let Henry live came late in the day and would appear to have been a box-office consideration. (Apart from SVENGALI in 1931, horror films with downbeat endings were unheard of at this time.) It should be noted, however, that the idea of killing off Henry was Whale's as a safeguard against any future forays into Frankensteinian history, and as such was not essential to the film. Indeed, letting Henry survive appreciably enlarges our understanding of his character and that of the Monster. At the very end, as it now stands, Henry at long last has learned a sense of genuine responsibility for his actions—because, at first, he refuses to go with Elizabeth. ("But I can't leave them, I can't!") The Monster, in insisting that Henry go, is thereby allowed to show a level of judgment and compassion that he would otherwise lack. The Monster has come to terms with his God. It is a curious and possibly unique example of a film being actually strengthened by box-office concerns.

BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN's greatness is almost completely attributable to the man who made it, James Whale—a filmmaker worthy of inclusion in anyone's pantheon of greats. It is first and foremost his film. The complexities in it are the complexities of Whale as man and artist. One cannot but feel that here he expressed things in a more assured voice than ever before or after, that the moment where the Monster realizes that even a woman quite literally "made for him" is not the answer is an assessment that Whale himself had completely come to terms with in understanding himself and his sexuality. The central idea that the "love of a good woman" could not make everything magically "right"—a notion that many people, including gay people, still cherish—had been voiced in Whale's THE INVISIBLE MAN (1933), but here Whale elaborates on that idea and makes it articulate, just as he has made his Monster so. The Monster (an outsider who

Continued on page 72

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Our Man on Baker Street

by David Stuart Davies

My Interview With Basil Rathbone

Well, dear reader, I guess that title grabbed your attention. Perhaps you are now thinking that this is a trick. Davies has interviewed Basil Rathbone, the superintendent of his local swimming baths, the one with acne and a nasal drip. No. My title refers to the Basil Rathbone of Captain Blood, Robin Hood, Zorro, and, of course, Sherlock Holmes fame. The Basil, who is still to this day, I believe, the most loved of all screen Sherlocks.

The idea for this article was kindled when I saw a photograph in a recent copy of *Scarlet Street* of our beloved editors Richard Valley and Tom Amorosi with screen legend Fay Wray. Lucky devils, I thought. It only comes to a select few to be able to share a drink with a lady who's been carried up the Empire State Building by a big ape or fought off the unwanted advances of creepy Lionel Atwill. (Come to think of it, that situation was not so rare.) Fat chance of me ever meeting Fay, I thought. Other peo-

ple meet legends. I have a friend, Ernest Dudley, a charming crime-writer of advanced years, who not only met but danced with Fred Astaire . . .

I had better explain. Ernest was an entertainment columnist on the *Daily Mail* in the twenties. And as such he got to know a number of performers who were appearing in stage shows at the time, including the graceful Fred. Now, Ernest fancied himself a dancer—still does, actually—and he was fascinated by one complicated dance step that Astaire demonstrated each night in his show. Late one evening, Ernest was walking down Burlington Arcade, off Piccadilly, when he bumped into Fred. They got to talking and my friend asked how the dancer carried out that complicated step. "You mean this one," grinned Fred, spinning round, arms in the air, feet flashing. (Imagine the scene: If Ernest had been Ginger Rogers they would have been married the next day—if Edward Everett Horton had let them!) "That is the one," said Ernest, attempt-



ing, and failing, to mimic the maestro. "Come round after the show tomorrow night and I'll show you how it's done," said Fred, departing with a cheery wave.

Ernest did go round the next night and Fred Astaire did show him how to replicate the dance step—thus Ernest's claim that he danced with Fred Astaire. A wonderful, true story. I can remember when Ernest told me about the incident a few years ago. We were in a hotel bar waiting for the waiter to arrive with our drinks and, out of the blue, Ernest announced loudly, "Of course, you know, I danced with Fred Astaire." At this juncture, our waiter arrived. His jaw dropped . . . as did our drinks.

But back to Basil . . . now there's a legend I would love to have met. A New York chum, Bill Nadel, used to see him in his local grocery store quite a lot. He even saw him buying denture fixative—but I really don't want to know that sort of detail. My heroes must remain untarnished, with a full set of teeth.

Another friend, Tony Howlett, who is now president of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London, was telephoned by Basil Rathbone when the actor was visiting London in 1966. Apparently he was considering returning to the part of Sherlock Holmes on radio and he wanted to talk to Tony, who was chairman of the Holmes Society then and a respected Sherlockian, to discuss the project and to pick his brains. Tony remembers the occasion vividly: the phone rang and the dark voice at the other end said, "Hello, this is Basil Rathbone . . ." Now what would your reply have been? "And I'm Nigel Bruce," springs to my mind. But Tony's the epitome of an English gentleman and, while perhaps being tempted to utter some sarcastic riposte, simply replied, "Could you say that again, please?" Rathbone chuckled and said, "It really is Basil Rathbone."

Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce were paired for the second time as the Great Detective and the Good Doctor in *THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* (1939), considered by many to be the best of the duo's 14 Holmes pictures. *Scarlet Street's* coverage of this classic film (Issue #13) included interviews with costars Terence Kilburn and Ida Lupino and is still (we subtly hint) available from our back issue department.





When *Scarlet Street* publisher/editor Richard Valley met Basil Rathbone in the early sixties, the distinguished actor was loathe to discuss his appearances for American International Pictures—though this photo from *THE GHOST IN THE INVISIBLE BIKINI* (1966) proves that the actor was perfectly willing to get into the spirit of things.

Tony sat down in amazement. The actor explained the reason for his call and asked if Tony would dine with him that evening. Imagine that, folks. The best Sherlock Holmes ever wants to take you, a devoted Holmes fan, out to dinner. It's a dream come true. Tony was a young barrister in those days and he was working on a very difficult case at the time and it had reached a critical stage. He really could not afford the time to go out to dinner that evening and so, regrettably, had to decline the invitation. He could not make the date. Rathbone understood and said that perhaps they could meet up in London the following year. Sadly, the following year Basil Rathbone died, never returning to London. Tony never got to meet his hero and, while that phone call is a cherished memory, he still harbours that dark regret of not having done something desperate and ingenious in order to keep that dinner date.

A luckier fellow is Richard Valley. He actually met and spoke with Rathbone. It was in the early sixties in a Paramus, New Jersey, department store, when the actor was signing copies of his recently published autobiography, *In and Out of Character*. Richard and Basil chatted amicably for a few minutes, Rathbone delighting in talking about Guy of Gisborne, Sherlock Holmes, and even Wolf von Frankenstein. However, when Richard asked Basil if he had en-

joyed making his most recent movie, AIP's *THE COMEDY OF TERRORS*, he returned with a brisk "no" and turned to the next customer.

But what, I hear you say, about your interview with Basil Rathbone? Well, there is one. And it's mine! Recently a videotape has come into my possession that contains a live television interview that Edward R. Murrow conducted with Basil Rathbone in the early sixties. It's my tape, so it's my interview. What makes the interview rather special, apart from its rarity, is the fact that Rathbone is at home in his apartment in midtown Manhattan overlooking Central Park, and Murrow is in the studio. During the course of the interview we are shown around the apartment which he shares with his wife Ouida and his daughter Cynthia, along with "another member of my household, Ginger, a red cocker."

Murrow commences the interview by informing the viewers that "Basil Rathbone will be forever associated with the man with the pipe, the magnifying glass, and the odd-looking hat. All clues lead us to deduce that he is waiting for us, now. Is that right, Mr. Holmes—or should I say Mr. Rathbone?"

At this point he turns to a large screen in the studio and, thanks to the miracle of television (and it was pretty miraculous in those days), we see Basil sitting in his own armchair at home with Ginger

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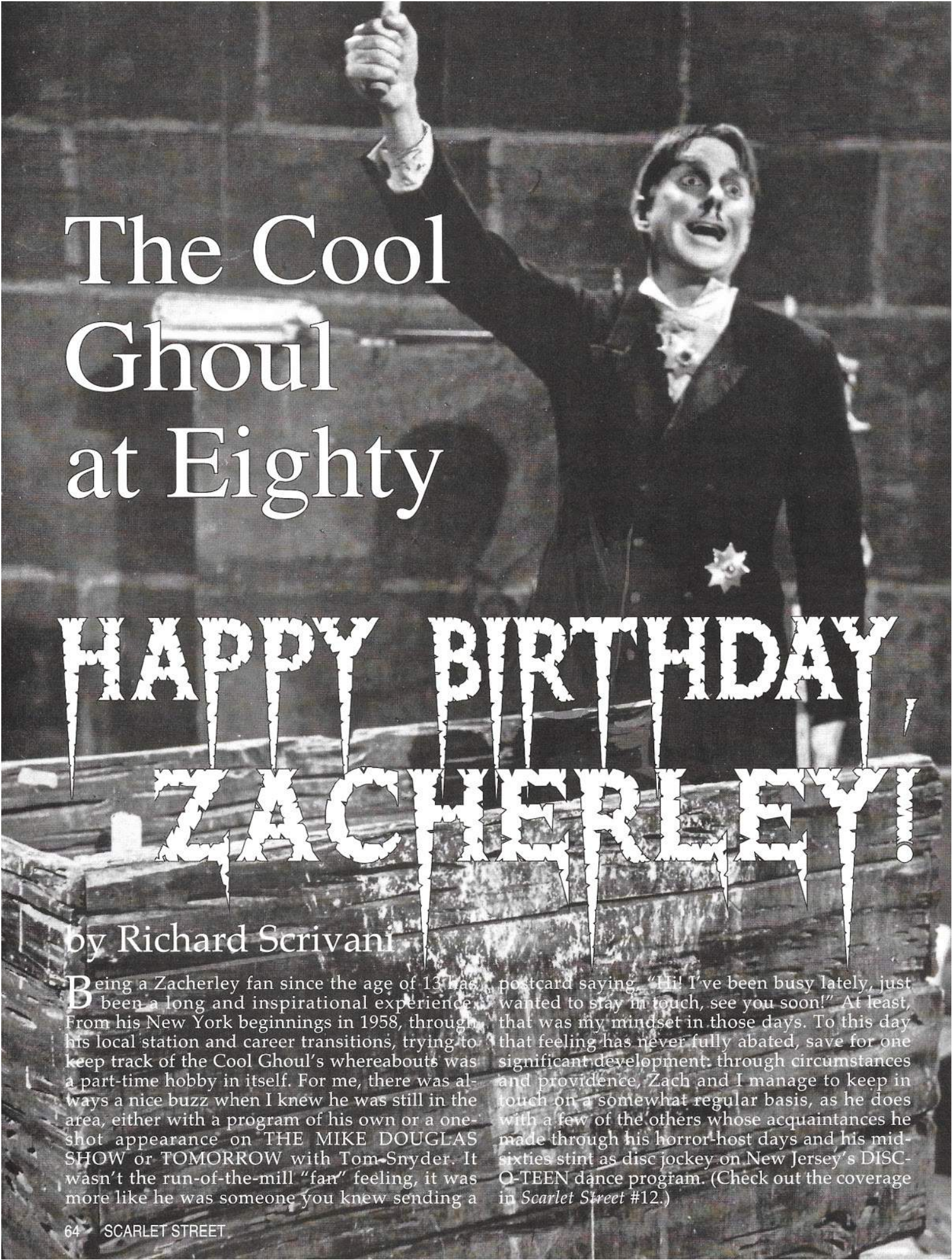
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by his side. He is dressed in a dark suit, white shirt, and black tie. His hair is sleeked back and he wears his villain's moustache, like a thick streak of black grease paint slashed under that superb aquiline nose. He is grinning: "Good evening, my dear Watson—or should I say Mr. Murrow?" And do you know—he really sounds like Sherlock Holmes!

What follows is a fascinating and revealing interview. Like to read about it? Then grab a copy of the next issue of *Scarlet Street* . . .

Continued next issue . . .



The Cool Ghoul at Eighty

HAPPY BIRTHDAY ZACHERLEY!

by Richard Scrivani

Being a Zacherley fan since the age of 13 has been a long and inspirational experience. From his New York beginnings in 1958, through his local station and career transitions, trying to keep track of the Cool Ghoul's whereabouts was a part-time hobby in itself. For me, there was always a nice buzz when I knew he was still in the area, either with a program of his own or a one-shot appearance on THE MIKE DOUGLAS SHOW or TOMORROW with Tom Snyder. It wasn't the run-of-the-mill "fan" feeling, it was more like he was someone you knew sending a

postcard saying, "Hi! I've been busy lately, just wanted to stay in touch, see you soon!" At least, that was my mindset in those days. To this day that feeling has never fully abated, save for one significant development: through circumstances and providence, Zach and I manage to keep in touch on a somewhat regular basis, as he does with a few of the others whose acquaintances he made through his horror-host days and his mid-sixties stint as disc jockey on New Jersey's DISCO-TEEN dance program. (Check out the coverage in *Scarlet Street* #12.)

And now, as unheard-of as it may seem, our tall, slim, soft-spoken friend from childhood has reached a milestone. September 1998—Zacherley's 80th birthday! Incredible, you say? Anyone who has had the good fortune to meet the man finds it almost impossible to think of him as anywhere near that mark; sixties, maybe, with a wisp of gray hair not appreciably thinner than in the old days, and with a quick wit and twinkle in the eye that closes the deal. Eighty? No way! I was there. I know. And many others will know soon, for a gala festival—Zach's official birthday celebration—will be held at next October's Chiller Theatre Expo in New Jersey's Meadowlands (the birthplace of the notorious giant amoeba, aka "Slobbus Amoebus," aka "Phyllis"), and thrown by the convention's crazed creator, Dr. Kevin Clement. The revelry on that landmark weekend will likely be heard clear to Transylvania—its only equal, the evening that Frankenstein's Monster invaded Vasaria's Festival of the New Wine.

So, ghosts and gals, on this occasion I think it fitting to provide a Zacherley vignette, a glimpse into the true nature of our favorite TV Ghoul . . .

Back in 1966, during the run of the aforementioned dance show, Zach employed variations of his usual props, among them his "wife" Isobel's casket/laundry hamper, the famous electrical "zap" machine (Zach's term), and an old, creepy, Gothic carved chair. He has had, through the years and at different stations, variations of this latter piece of furniture, but the one from the Channel 47 show was particularly eye-catching—five feet high, its back rising to a rounded peak with deep-carved leaves and scrolls. The backrest and seat was upholstered in plush red velvet, a fitting throne for America's most legendary and beloved horror host.

One quiet afternoon, soon after the blizzard of '96, my phone rang. It was Zach. What he asked me at first seemed somewhat cryptic. "Didn't you tell me that you had a screening room, a movie theater in your basement?" I answered, "Yes," that I had been a 16mm collector since the sixties, and that my screening area downstairs had through

the years slowly taken on the aura of a small movie theater. "Is there room down there for the old Disc-O-Teen chair?" he continued. "Absolutely!" I shot back, fully knowing that I'd make room even if it meant throwing out some of my own furniture. "Well, would you like to have it?" he asked. "I really need to make some room here." I've since forgotten my exact reply, but it was surely somewhere along the lines of, "Is Charlie Chan Chinese?"—followed by promises of how much I'd treasure it. Zach's only reply was, "Good, good, then I'll finish reupholstering it. Call you when it's ready!"

I was dumbfounded. Not only was I being offered the Holy Grail of collectibles for a Zacherley fan, but he was going to personally spruce it up to look just like new (or newly old)!

The second phone call came about 10 days later. The chair was ready. I waited until the roads thawed out, rented a wreck, and made my way across the dreaded amoeba-infested Jersey Swamps, through the Black Forest, and finally up Mount Gasport to Zach's mysterious digs, where the Master himself helped me carry the ancient piece of furniture down his winding stone stairway to the cobbled street below and into the wheezy old truck. He bid me a fond farewell, promising to come visit some day and see his "old friend" in its new home. And in its new home it proudly sits to this day, cherished by one very lucky Zacherley friend and devotee. Furthermore, true to his word, a visit was paid shortly thereafter by Zach's alter-ego, John Zacherle, and a photographic record (see below) made of the event.

It should be mentioned that, fortunate as I am to be in possession of this prized (and very comfortable) heirloom, I will always feel more like a custodian than an owner, charged with the happy task of taking care of it and keeping it at the ready; and should TV's Grand Master of Macabre Ceremonies ever be in need of it, the Zacherchair is his for the asking, and forever shall be . . .

Happy Birthday, Zach, and, on turning 80, we're sure you're saying, "Isn't that exciting!"



PAGE 64: There's no denying that legendary horror host Zacherley has staked out a place in the hearts of fright fans from coast to coast. **BELOW LEFT:** In his civilian guise as John Zacherle, the Cool Ghoul visits the home of *Scarlet Street* writer Richard Scrivani, the better to sit in one of his classic old chairs. Zach paid to have the antique piece reupholstered entirely on his own when Groucho came up a little short. **BELOW RIGHT:** At a Chiller Convention in New Jersey, Zacherley delights in a vintage edition of *Scarlet Street: The Magazine of Mystery and Horror*. He's been the official host of Chiller since its inception in 1990.

Photo courtesy of Richard Scrivani



Book Ends

The Scarlet Street Review of Books

DRUMS OF TERROR: VOODOO IN THE CINEMA

Bryan Senn

Midnight Marquee Press, 1998
256 pages—\$20

Pity the forgotten zombie! Has he (it?) ever been anything more than a poor relation of the immortal vampire, the shape-shifting werewolf, or even his slow-moving cousin, the living mummy? In the entire history of motion pictures, is it surprising that only two, maybe three zombie films can reasonably be considered classics of the horror genre?

No, it isn't, but that hasn't stopped Bryan Senn from taking up the case for the walking dead by-products of the Voudoun religion. Senn's *Drums of Terror*, subtitled *Voodoo in the Cinema*, is not a typical horror study—a major plus these days, when the quantity of such books is astonishingly plentiful, and the quality of most is distressingly poor. For one thing, few such studies begin with a lesson in theology. Senn, however, knows that a true understanding of voodoo movies requires at least a rudimentary acquaintance with the actual religion. He presents a brief history of loas (spirits), zombies, voodoo drums, dolls, and the like in a highly readable manner, then launches into the cold meat of the matter: the movies.

And what a frightfully eclectic collection it is: KING OF THE ZOMBIES (1941), VOODOO MAN (1944), WEIRD WOMAN (1944), DR. TERROR'S HOUSE

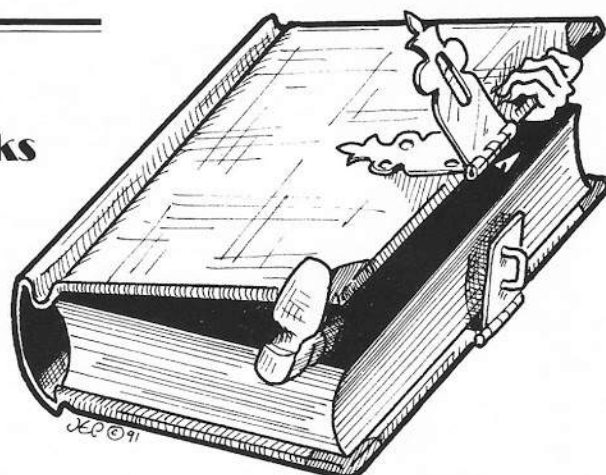
OF HORRORS (1965), THE OBLONG BOX (1969), SUGAR HILL (1974), ZOMBIE (1979), THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW (1988), and many, many more, including those two, maybe three classics: WHITE ZOMBIE (1932), I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE (1943), and THE PLAGUE OF THE ZOMBIES (1966).

Senn has his quirks as a writer, not the least being the blinders he sports whenever comedy relief—and, in some cases, entire comedies—appears on the screen. (An exception is his fondness for the talented Mantan Moreland.) He's at his best when he goes against the grain, as he does in a winning chapter on THE VAMPIRE'S GHOST (1945), a poverty-row feature with a fresh premise and some sparkling dialogue. It's the sort of film dismissed by lesser critics, often for the very ideas Senn finds compelling.

Drums of Terror covers 39 movies in detail, followed by shorter critiques (under the headings "Pseudoo-Voodoo" and "Boob Toob Hoodoo") of over 50 more films. If you're itching to tour Haiti, to drop by the local houmfort (the place of worship), to meet a zombie or two (if not in Haiti, then perhaps on Broadway), let Bryan Senn be your tour guide and the attractively-designed *Drums of Terror* be your guide book. You can't do better.

—Drew Sullivan

Hammer's THE PLAGUE OF THE ZOMBIES (1966) cleverly shifted its voodoo hijinks from the isle of Haiti to England's Cornwall, where the walking dead are forced to work the local mines.



SCREAMS OF REASON: MAD SCIENCE AND MODERN CULTURE

David J. Skal

W.W. Norton and Co., 1998
368 pages—\$29.95

Someone commented to me before I read David J. Skal's *Screams of Reason* that it was "one of the best film books ever written." Strong words. And yet, having admired Skal's writing and even feeling an occasional kinship with him (perhaps a generational thing, since he and I are contemporaries and he sometimes seems to be a spokesperson for that generation), I was willing to believe that this might possibly be so. Well, I have now read *Screams of Reason* and, frankly, it is not "one of the best film books ever written" for one simple reason: it isn't a film book per se. It is very much more than that. Despite its underpinnings as an exploration of the depiction of "mad science" and, especially, "mad scientists" and their relation to the societies in which they exist, what Skal gives us is a carefully detailed, lively, and very readable look at the uneasy relation between science—mad, merely irrational, and even sane—and society over a huge span of time (basically from the creation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in 1918 up to the present day).

As always, he manages to do this without ever letting the reader lose sight of the fact that, academic as it may seem, this is a very personal work. David J. Skal is himself present throughout the book—his personal experiences being brought into play where they relate to his subject—and this gives *Screams of Reason* more the feeling of spending the evening with a supreme raconteur than a pontificating pedant of academia. Even when he leads us off into areas where we may not agree (the vaginal significance of the wound in the head of the Frankenstein Monster has raised several—ahem!—eyebrows), or where we may not be all that personally interested (UFOs and abductions by proctologists from outer space are decidedly not this reviewer's dish of tea), Skal is such a brilliant writer that we are more than happy to go along with him. Whether we are in accord after the spell of his words are safely behind us is another matter,

Continued on page 68

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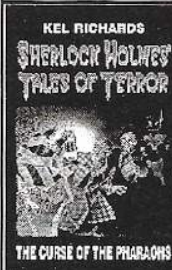


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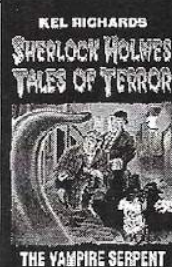
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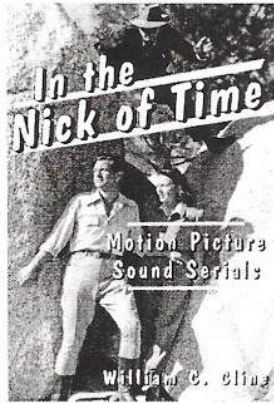
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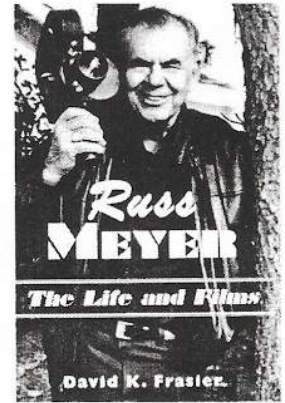
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BOOK ENDS

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but there's no denying that he's held us in that spell for awhile and has made us think in the process!

Screams of Reason is an amazingly daunting work. Once the reader realizes the enormity of its scope, the question races to the foreground—can the author possibly pull all this together in a cohesive and coherent manner? The answer is an astonished "yes," as Skal manages to tie up his various threads with all the assurance of a serial hero who knows he will only appear to have fallen off the cliff until you see the next chapter. Anyone who can manage to address the history of the creation of the novel, *Frankenstein*, discuss in effective detail nearly all of its various screen incarnations, and also have the wit and resource to touch on such related matters as Ken Russell's *GOTHIC* (1986), Ivan Passer's *HAUNTED SUMMER* (1988), and Roger Corman's *FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND* (1990) deserves nothing but praise and respect. Skal's research is impeccable, but what most amazes the reader is the sheer scope of his frame of reference. He can move with the ease of the truly knowledgeable from Mary Shelley to Charles Darwin to Oscar Wilde to Robert Louis Stevenson to H.G. Wells to Karel Capek to Fritz Lang to James Whale and on and on. And, unlike many writers with a passion for the arts, Skal keeps a firm hold on world history, which is especially essential with a premise such as this. There is no sense that *Screams of*

Reason was created in the rarefied realm of the arts alone. The "real" world is always there and always real and the author is clearly a part of it—he's not looking down on it from a superior height. Skal has that which is often sorely lacking in art itself today—a genuine worldview.

Will the book please everyone? Hardly. A number of readers will doubtless come away from *Screams of Reason* in a state of great agitation, though it will be interesting—and telling—to see who is upset by what! Some people will surely have their withers wrung by the homosexual subtexts concerning Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). Others will inevitably be put off by Skal's reading of what might be behind the rash of stories about abduction by space aliens. Still others will take offense at his questioning the essential "rightness" of such cultural icons as Carl Sagan and Stephen Hawking. As such, the book is apt to cause a great deal of lively (and hopefully, healthy) debate, which, in a world of books more apt to elicit a yawn than a scream (of reason or otherwise), is perhaps the highest praise I can give this truly fine and unique work.

—Ken Hanke

NOSFERATU

Jim Shepherd
Alfred A. Knopf, 1998
215 pages—\$22

A strange and not entirely explicable fiction based on the life of the great

director F.W. Murnau, *Nosferatu* is at once a fascinating and curiously dispassionate work, with a structure that clearly bespeaks of its origins as a smaller idea—a fictional diary of the making of Murnau's 1922 horror classic, *NOSFERATU*—expanded to short novel length. The result of this is, in part, a narrative that jumps from a third person first act to a first person second act to a third person third act with less than wholly satisfactory results. Structure, however, is the least of the book's problems. Much more unsettling is the odd mixture of emotional minimalism with an abundance of historical detail (not all of which is as accurate as the author's research would suggest; e.g., it seems scarcely likely that Murnau would be remarking about the special effects in the 1924 *THIEF OF BAGDAD* while planning his 1922 *NOSFERATU*). It's all rather fascinating, but somewhat short of satisfying. We know that this is not film history and yet it is written with history seemingly in the forefront, the human drama left to fend for itself with a bare minimum of characterization. Unlike Christopher Bram's fictional account of the last days of James Whale, *Father of Frankenstein*, in which the author tries to understand and convey what he understands about his lead character, Jim Shepard seems content to offer us a rough sketch of Murnau (and even rougher ones of those in his sphere) and we are to make of it what we will. Unfor-

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Whale Hunt!

The Search for James Whale

by Ken Hanke

For a director dismissed by even so savvy a critic as Andrew Sarris as "lightly likable," James Whale has had an astonishing amount of ink spilled (and film exposed) on his behalf in recent years, until there are now three (two of them, admittedly, by the same author) books on his life and career, not to mention parts of other books; articles; a novel by Christopher Bram based on his last days, *Father of Frankenstein* (Dutton, 1995); and Bill Condon's fine film of that novel, *GODS AND MONSTERS*—enough Whale material to satisfy even Captain Ahab! Or it ought to be, yet it somehow still seems to fall short of an entirely successful Whaling expedition . . .

The three bios—*James Whale* by James Curtis (Scarecrow Press, 1982), *James Whale: A Biography or The Would-be Gentleman* by Mark Gatiss (Cassell, 1995), and *James Whale: A New World of Gods and Monsters* again by Curtis (Faber and Faber, 1998)—all have merits, as well as shortcomings. Curtis' original biography for Scarecrow, while lacking in many areas and now superseded by his new book (which absorbs most of the old book's material), is certainly noteworthy if only as a pioneering effort on Whale. It did chronicle Whale's career and life in a way no one else had ever done, but it clearly—ostensibly at the behest of Whale's longtime companion, David Lewis—downplayed the director's homosexuality, and, partly as a result of this, failed to really come to grips with the films. Alas, despite good intentions all around, this is precisely the area in which the subsequent Whale books still fall sadly short.

The Gatiss biography, by far the slighter of the two newer books, is a valiant effort at attempting to integrate the man and his work. At least, that is the stated intent. The back cover itself proclaims that the book "examines Whale's extraordinary rise to prominence, the gay sensibility of his films, and the popular theory that Hollywood homophobia led directly to his downfall"—bold claims, and the book never quite lives up to them. At best, Gatiss makes a few remarkably tentative stabs at connecting a gay sensibility to the films. These are mostly related to references that suggest the possibility that

Colin Clive (whom Gatiss, contrary to Curtis, describes as bisexual) in *FRANKENSTEIN* (1931) was meant to be the director's onscreen alter ego, and the fairly obvious observation that Whale's films are brimming with a fondness for and understanding of characters who are somehow "different." The frustrating aspect of all this is that Gatiss so often gets within inches of an assessment that looks promisingly like it might suggest something fresh—and then the whole thing slips right through his fingers. For example, in discussing Mae Clarke's performance in *WATERLOO BRIDGE* (1931) Gatiss notes, "Through the tre-

mendous vitality of Whale's direction, it is she, rather than [Kent] Douglass, who carries the film. In her mannerisms, her strength, her independence, and perhaps even her lack of real emotion, Myra is more like a man than a woman. In contrast, it is Douglass' Roy who comes closer to the traditional depiction of the female." Fascinating, correct, and telling, but Gatiss leaves us hanging by not exploring what this might mean or even what it means to him.

Still, at least Gatiss sees Whale's films as having a gay subtext. Curtis completely ignores or dismisses this, partly on the assumptions of Whale's friends and intimates, who say that Whale would never have incorporated such elements into his work. Very likely he wouldn't have done so—consciously (at least as anything other than an in-joke). But what might Whale have done instinctively? What did he tell us unconsciously? Curtis seems not to accept these possibilities and must, one supposes, view the creation of art as a wholly conscious act—a somewhat shortsighted and even dreary notion that does no service to Whale's work or art in general. Indeed, Curtis seems to cherish only the most hackneyed ideas of gayness by admitting that Whale's sexuality is expressed only in the flamboyant design consciousness of his films. After he has cited the example of Whale's penchant for "oversized floral arrangements," it is hard not to expect Emory from *THE BOYS IN THE BAND* to mince onto the scene and exclaim, "Oh, Mary, it takes a fairy to make something pretty!" This is perhaps to be expected of someone who is apparently not entirely in sympathy with the topic, as witness his tired reference to the word gay "in the traditional and, lamentably, archaic sense of the word." There is a rather unpleasant odor of overripe cliché to Curtis' take on homosexuality that is not entirely dispelled by his decision at book's end to have David Lewis' ashes placed directly across from those of Whale at Forest Lawn.

Still, it is almost impossible to fault Curtis' research. He has unearthed more information on Whale's life and career than one would have thought possible—and, in some cases, than one might have desired. Perhaps because it



James Whale's jealousy of star Boris Karloff—a monster he had created by making the actor famous via *FRANKENSTEIN* (1931)—resulted in the director posing for an inordinately large number of publicity stills during the making of *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1935).



As an artistic, working-class gay man who at times tried to pass himself off as a member of the British upper class, James Whale was different—and attracted to people and characters who likewise lived outside the “norm.” LEFT: One of Whale’s lifelong friends was actor Ernest Thesiger (pictured with Whale on the set of 1935’s *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*). Thesiger was gay, married to his lover’s sister, a soldier in World War One, a master of needlepoint. RIGHT: Colin Clive (pictured with Thesiger in *BRIDE*) was a nerve-shattered alcoholic, married to a lesbian and reputedly bisexual, who drank himself to death at the age of 37. BELOW LEFT: Elsa Lanchester played Mary Shelley in the witty *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* prologue, opposite Gavin Gordon as the notoriously bisexual Lord Byron. In real life, of course, Lanchester was married to yet another gay actor and Whale associate: Charles Laughton. BELOW RIGHT: In *SHOW BOAT* (1936), Helen Morgan played Julie, whose mixed blood sends her into exile from her show business companions. In real life, Morgan (pictured with Irene Dunne) was, like Colin Clive, an alcoholic.

was already overly familiar material by the time I read the book, I found myself with a sense of knowing far more about *JOURNEY’S END* as a 1929 stage production than necessary. This, however, is a small price to pay for the background on the making of Whale’s films, which could not—factually, at least—be bettered. Where Curtis doesn’t quite succeed here—nor, in fact, does Gatiss—is in the fact that Whale never seems quite a living character in his own story. So very little sense of the man himself emerges from the facts and the background that Whale ultimately seems less substantial than do the events surrounding the making of his movies. This is a great pity in that it is hard to imagine the man who made such amazing films as *WATERLOO BRIDGE*, *FRANKENSTEIN*, *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* (1932), *THE INVISIBLE MAN* (1933), *ONE MORE RIVER* (1934), *BRIDE OF*

FRANKENSTEIN (1935), *REMEMBER LAST NIGHT?* (1935), and *SHOW BOAT* (1936) as anything less than fascinating and very much alive. Curtis’ portrait of Whale is historically very sound, but where is the essence of the man? The passion? The wit? If the answer—as seems inevitably the case—lies in the films themselves, we would never know it from Curtis’ unwillingness or inability to link them with the man. What we are left with is an anecdotal portrait of Whale with little to suggest what those anecdotes reveal in the final analysis. (Though heavily fictionalized, it is likely that Bram’s novel, *Father of Frankenstein*, and Bill Condon’s film of it offer more successful portraits of Whale as a living, breathing person of immense complexity, humor, and sadness.)

As examinations of Whale’s work, both Curtis and Gatiss fall amazingly short of the mark. Had I come to either’s

work without already knowing the films of James Whale, I doubt seriously that I would have felt compelled to seek those films out—and that, I suggest, is the first duty of any book about an artist: it must convey the writer’s own excitement over the work of his subject and communicate that to the reader. Gatiss fares better in this department, managing to transmit the sense that he genuinely loves Whale’s works, but he nonetheless gives them fairly short shrift in terms of describing them and giving a sense of what makes them unique. Gatiss, however, is much more generous in this regard than is Curtis, though he breezes over such films as 1932’s *IMPATIENT MAIDEN* (to a degree that one suspects he was unable to screen it for the book) and 1934’s *BY CANDLELIGHT* (which he obviously screened by virtue of commenting on the

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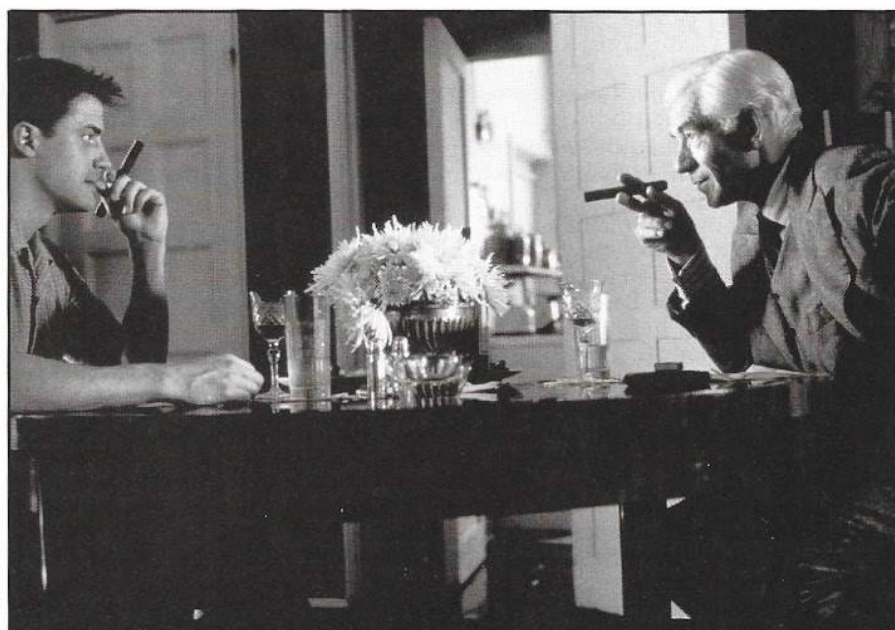
In one of several clever in-jokes sprinkled throughout Bill Condon's *GODS AND MONSTERS*, Clayton Boone (Brendan Fraser) and James Whale (Ian McKellen) share stogies in much the same way as did *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*'s Blind Hermit and Monster.

WHALE HUNT

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film's sometimes overbearing musical score). Curtis often gives only a skimpy plot outline and little comment about what is onscreen. This is especially a disappointment when dealing with films that the reader is likely not to have been able to see. Gatiss, at least, offers a couple of rich dialogue bits from Whale's breathlessly brilliant *REMEMBER LAST NIGHT?*, while Curtis rather perversely seems to assume that the reader has seen the film, only to turn around and complain about its undeserved obscurity.

In the end, one is confronted with the question, which is the better book? Frankly, I'd say it's very nearly a wash. Gatiss' book is more personal and lively, with a somewhat better sense of Whale on the screen. Curtis' is brilliantly researched and a good picture of the mak-



ing of the films, but it remains distanced and detached. Of course, true admirers of Whale's work will insist on owning both, while still hoping for a book on Whale that will provide the guideposts

to understanding just why this director whom we are told is "lightly likable" is also endlessly fascinating.

Ken Hanke is the author of *Charlie Chan at the Movies* (McFarland, 1989).

BOOK ENDS

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unately, we aren't able to make as much of it as he perhaps thinks we are . . .

Shepard's premise is fairly simple. Murnau (still going by the name Plumpe) meets and falls in love with Hans while they are both students. Their romance is a drawn-out and tentative affair that is tarnished almost as soon as it is consummated by Murnau's brief affair with another man. As soon as Hans realizes what has happened (in a scene almost thrown away in terms of drama), he exits Murnau's life, and, before any kind of reconciliation or even understanding can be achieved, is killed in World War One. The thread that ties the book together concerns Murnau's combined sense of guilt and lifelong love for the dead man—a situation worsened by the rumor that Hans may have deliberately committed suicide on the battlefield. Somewhere behind every move that Murnau makes is his search for the answer to this mystery. It is undoubtedly a strong enough plot to carry the book, but we are never allowed to get close enough to Murnau to completely understand his devotion. We are merely to accept it while the book concerns itself with the filming of *NOSFERATU*, *THE LAST LAUGH* (1924), and *TABU* (1931). This also leaves one to wonder why the book merely mentions such essential Murnau works as *FAUST* (1926) and *SUNRISE* (1927)—especially the former, since discussions of Goethe's *FAUST* between Murnau and Hans figure in the book's first section). Again, all this is interesting, but it's difficult to conceive of the general readership interested in

Murnau's and Karl Freund's development of a gyroscopic camera stabilizer that allowed the freedom to shoot *THE LAST LAUGH* in an unusually fluid style. Even more problematic is the fact that this is handled in film-book jargon and is probably not even comprehensible to readers unfamiliar with such books.

That said, there are wonderful things in the book. Murnau's ersatz diaries smack of authenticity even with the occasional mistake and the knowledge that one cannot take any of this as a history lesson. Perhaps the most refreshing and surprising aspect of the book, however, lies in its utterly non-sensationalistic presentation of Murnau's sexuality. During a sequence in which the actor Conrad Veidt squires the youthful Murnau around various clubs in decadent Berlin, there are references to legal codes being broken by homosexual activities, but nothing is made of Murnau's sexuality in the usual breast-beating manner. His romance with Hans is merely given as a fact and accepted as such, presented in admirably straightforward fashion that never even flirts with the idea that such a relationship could in any way be "wrong." Murnau's sexuality even seems to be a generally accepted fact of the film scene, both in Germany (Emil Jannings jokes good-naturedly about it) and in Hollywood. (Murnau tells the story of Hans to Robert Flaherty's brother as if there could be nothing shocking about it and indeed the reaction—or non-reaction—bears him out.) Murnau is certainly painted as a tortured genius, but that torture is always rooted in his betrayal of Hans, his loss of him, and the idea that he may have committed suicide

over that betrayal, never because Murnau is gay. To some degree, this may be the result of the largely dispassionate approach Shepard gives to most events in the novel. Regardless, it is probably the book's finest achievement and possibly its most lasting one. Because of this, and because it offers at least the illusion of a behind-the-scenes look at three legendary films, *Nosferatu*, for all its flaws, is certainly worth a read.

—Ken Hanke

SET VISITS

Bill Warren

McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997
311 pages—\$39.50

Bill Warren loves the movies. He loves watching them, he loves watching them being made, and he loves writing about them. He is proud to be, first and foremost, a fan. He came to Los Angeles in 1966 " . . . hoping to get work in movies, but I didn't go about things the right way, and I've never been on that side of the business." Through the kindness of Forrest J Ackerman and producer Luis Enrique Vergara, he was able to visit the sets of Boris Karloff's last four movies, beginning an addiction to set visits that has served him well as a writer on film.

Set Visits: Interviews with 32 Horror and Science Fiction Filmmakers is chock full of the nuts and bolts operation of creating a movie. If you've ever wondered what, exactly, a producer does, or how certain special effects are created, read this book. All the disciplines necessary to make a horror or sci-fi film are richly represented here.

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BILL CONDON

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"I did my first movie with Arthur Dignam, *STRANGE BEHAVIOR*. He played the mad doctor Le Sangel in that. He's a wonderful Australian actor who people might remember from such early Fred Schepisi films as *THE DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND*, in which he played a lecherous priest. After reading so many people, it just seemed to me that he was the only one who could really conjure Thesiger up. He agreed to come in for a day's work all the way from Australia! As for Elsa Lanchester, Rosalind Ayres was a godsend. I think of her as Elsa with a little bit of Susan Sarandon sprinkled in. There's one moment when she's standing with Whale at a George Cukor party and says, "I didn't know you were here," and for a second it feels completely as if you're watching Elsa.

"As for the older Karloff, there's a funny story. At the Saturn Awards, I ran into Martin Landau, who suggested that he should have played Karloff. That would have been unique, wouldn't it? One actor playing both Karloff and Lugosi! But the actor we chose, Jack Betts, was wonderful, although in real life he's a dead ringer for Clark Gable, which didn't do us any good at all. Luckily, with Karloff we had life masks to work from, so we were able to play around with prosthetics."

One Whale intimate who didn't make it into the film is Elsa Lanchester's husband, Charles Laughton, who made his American film debut in *THE OLD DARK HOUSE* (1932) and figured in an early sequence in Bram's novel.

"I never planned to include the Laughton flashback," Condon explained. "I loved it, but it seemed to be off the point of the rest of the story. The one I desperately wanted to do—and I had it in the first draft, but just couldn't afford—is the scene where Whale leaves the doctor's office and finds himself being driven by Hannah down Hollywood Boulevard, and he remembers the opening of *CAMILLE* at the Chinese Theatre. It would have allowed us a brief glimpse of his relationship with his lover, David Lewis, when it was going well. And, of course, it would have been the opening of a Cukor movie so it would have helped to establish that rivalry. And it would have given us a scene with Garbo, a very mysterious moment when these two people briefly cross paths. I loved that and I wish we'd been able to put that in, due to the budget."

GODS AND MONSTERS was made for three and a half million. It's set in glamorous Hollywood. It's a period piece—a four-period piece, actually, with scenes set in 1900 (approximately), 1918, 1935, and 1957. *Scarlet Street* asked Condon how he managed to make such a wide-ranging film on so small a budget.

"It was scary, but we planned it like a war. Like a big battle. I could give you an entire list of people who made it possible, starting with the actors, who had these big, big scenes and were perfect on the first take. Obviously we were lucky to have Bruce Finlayson on the costumes. Bruce would be up till three in the morning sewing a costume himself if it was necessary—and it often was necessary. And then with the sets—our whole approach there was the early Merchant Ivory approach, which is that you save your budget for a couple of big scenes, and that gives an overall illusion of opulence. In our case, that was the party at the Cukor house with all the extras, and of course the lab from *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*. The really scary thing was that we had only 24 days to shoot the entire film, and certain constraints start to seem appealing for people who want to keep the money in check. There was always the danger that we might lose the Frankenstein laboratory, which made for a few sleepless nights. But we got it."

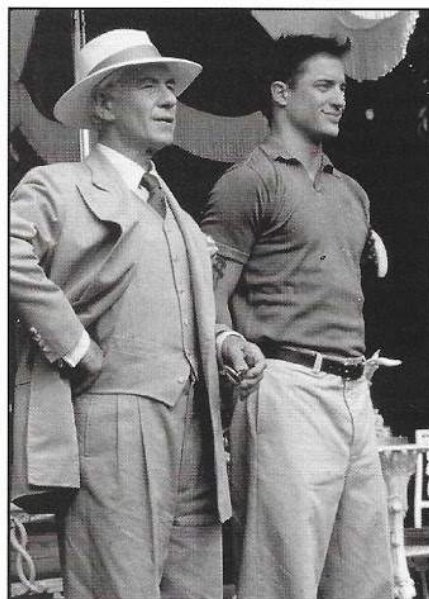
Executive producer Clive Barker was behind the project all the way. "Clive was kind of our godfather in putting it together. It's an area that he's expanding into, to sort of be like Coppola. He has amazing powers of persuasion, and

you're always teetering on the edge of destruction during preproduction. He'd always come in at the right moment and make an impassioned phone call, keep the money on track, and do all that."

GODS AND MONSTERS has gained some attention—negative in several quarters, positive in most—by being a movie featuring real-life gay people (Whale, Thesiger, Clive, Lewis, and Cukor), made by outspoken gay people. Like Barker, Ian McKellen, and Christopher Bram, Con-

don is openly gay. "As a matter of fact, there were lots of heads of departments on the film who were out, not that we ever planned it that way. I honestly wish it wasn't so rare a phenomenon."

If *GODS AND MONSTERS*, which is scheduled to open early in November, proves to be the popular and critical success it deserves to be, Bill Condon may very well get his wish.



Whale and Boone (Ian McKellen and Brendan Fraser) attend a gathering at George Cukor's.

THE BRIDE CAME C.O.L.D.

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can easily be read as an expression of Whale's outsider status as homosexual) is villain no longer, nor is God (whom the Monster viciously rejected in *FRANKENSTEIN*). Now, it is at the cruelty and misunderstanding of man that Whale points a finger. His subsequent films, by and large, bear this out. The director's sympathy remained very much with any character—Julie in *SHOW BOAT*, for example—who is somehow an outcast.

James Whale never made another horror film, which is both regrettable and understandable—where was there for him to go after *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*? Perhaps the most amazing thing about the film, though, is that it was made at all. Whale and Karloff were certainly not the closest of friends (in *GODS AND MONSTERS*, James Whale is allowed to note that Karloff is "a very proper actor, and the dullest fellow imaginable"), and saw anything but eye to eye on the project. The best assessment of the torturous journey from concept to final film is found within the film itself. It can easily be read that Henry's reluctance to work on the creation of the Bride is a mirror of Mary Shelley's reluctance to tell the story in the first place—and reflected Whale's own thoughts about a sequel to *FRANKENSTEIN*. Like Henry Frankenstein himself, Whale had a "terrible lesson" to learn making *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*—namely, that his thunder would be stolen by his star and that he would be forever typed as a horror film specialist. In *BRIDE*, he made sure that these circumstances would not happen again, and if he didn't quite succeed in putting an end to further Frankenstein films, that's less a comment on Whale than on commercialism. It never occurred to Whale that his creation was immortal—as far as he was concerned, the Monster died in the tower, and that was that.

CURTIS HARRINGTON

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see him socially from time to time and I think he's done an incredible job of research on the new edition. One of the things that I got from James Curtis is copies of the reviews of the play, *THE MAN WITH THE RED HAIR*, in which James Whale played Charles Laughton's son in England in 1928. It's so interesting, because there's a caricature in one of the reviews of James Whale—it's a caricature dated March 31st, 1928, in a copy of *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, and there's a drawing of James Whale and he's wearing—it looks like the suit and the short sleeves that the Monster had! That's what he did when he played the role—he shortened his sleeves! That was an idea he'd had for a long time, and then he applied it to the Monster.

SS: You've said in the past that you do not believe there's really what one would call a "gay sensibility" in Whale's films.

CH: No, I didn't quite say that. It depends on your definitions, of course. He certainly had a camp sensibility in his humor. Some people would call that gay. It's all in the eye of the beholder as far as I'm concerned, but what I did say was that he wouldn't—that I can't conceive of him thinking, in any way, that the Monster was a symbol for the homosexual as an outcast of society. I don't buy that. I don't think his mind worked that way, so I really don't believe it. But if somebody does, that's their privilege. It doesn't seem to me to suit the way he looked at things. I think all these analyses are fine—and it even happens with my own films; people give interpretations I never thought about. It's something imposed years later as an interpretation. Someone gives a Freudian interpretation to it, and that's fine . . .

SS: It might have been done unconsciously, but it wasn't as if Whale were setting up an agenda or anything of that nature.

CH: Not remotely. He wouldn't have thought that way at all.

SS: But a work of art than can be interpreted one way and one way only—is it really worth interpreting at all?

CH: There are a million interpretations and some of them seem to be right on the mark and others seem farfetched. Sometimes I'll read something about a film I've done and it seems like the perfect insight, and then I'll read something else and say, "My God, how did they come to that conclusion?" One of the things I've found when I talk to young people today—young gays and militant gays and people who are rather vociferously out of the closet—they don't seem to have any concept of what being gay was to someone like James Whale in the thirties, or any time in the past. They can't quite understand that homosexuality was always a taboo subject among the middle classes. Always. It still is. It's just as strong as ever. But there was no particu-

lar animus in the sophisticated circles of the theater and the arts. It never—either then or now—it just never existed. It isn't as though it was some great burden for Jimmy to be gay or admit he was gay. It was just the artistic world. Everybody knew most ballet dancers were gay and a lot of artists were and so what? And there was Gertrude Stein—about as obvious a dyke as you could ask for—in the public eye and giving lectures at Midwestern Ladies' Clubs and no one thought anything about it. It's on the lower level that there's always been a problem. The police were—I remember in Los Angeles, they were doing raids on gay bars years ago, and entrapment in men's rest rooms, and all those horrible things. That sort of thing has been at least minimized, now. You know, it's very interesting to me that I knew James Whale much later in life. He and David were still living together, but their inti-



Eva Moore and Gloria Stuart in *THE OLD DARK HOUSE*, rescued by Curtis Harrington.

mate relationship had ended quite some time before that. They apparently had lived together quite openly in Hollywood for a number of years, and I never heard any shocked rumors or whispers or anything, or noticed that anyone cared one way or the other about it. That's not to say there wasn't some individuals who were homophobic. In fact, I've heard that Louis B. Mayer was very homophobic.

SS: Is that actually Whale's house in *GODS AND MONSTERS*?

CH: No. I don't know whether it's a set or another location. The day that I spent with Ian McKellen, we went to the actual house together. Bill and his production people had arranged for the owners to let us go through it; partly, I was being brought there to jog my memory. But the house—well, it's been totally redecorated and just seeing the shape of the rooms is not the same. There's just no James Whale touch left. The house had been lived in for a while by Goldie Hawn, and she did a completely new kitchen and that sort of thing. I said,

"Well, this house has been Goldie Hawned!" It in no way resembled the house that I remembered. Whale had such distinctive taste. The other thing that is so incidentally interesting—it's the sort of thing that no one ever bothers to comment about—is that he had an enormous love for huge floral bouquets. There were always lots of them in his house.

SS: And his films!

CH: Particularly in films where he could really use them—like *THE KISS BEFORE THE MIRROR* or in *REMEMBER LAST NIGHT?*. It's pure James Whale. The style! It's just extraordinary and quite untypical of any other films. That's why I'm so gratified that his work is being rediscovered and appreciated at this point in time. One of the things I did recently was to go through some of my old film histories—Arthur Knight's *The Liveliest Art* and Lewis Jacobs' *The Rise of the American Film*—and Whale's work is not even mentioned! Not even mentioned! They pay no attention to his films! No one saw anything remotely special about them!

SS: Which is impossible to imagine, really.

CH: It is!

SS: Andrew Sarris placed Whale in a category headed "lightly likable;" he doesn't recognize anything about these films that is . . .

CH: Distinctive! And his films just reek of a personal touch—which, from my point of view, is the only thing that makes any film interesting. I go to films to see the imprint of the personality of the director. I'm not interested in a film that's just well directed.

SS: What's your most vivid memory of James Whale? Or is that an impossible question?

CH: Impossible! There are too many of them. I think the thing that moved me the most was a kindness he did in Paris that I will never forget. When I

went to Paris, I lived on a tiny—not even an allowance from my parents. I'd get an occasional \$20 in the mail that my dear mother sent me. I was living in a little Left Bank hotel for a dollar a day and eating in the cheapest restaurants, but it was great and thrilling to be in Paris. Whale arrived and one night he took me out to dinner at a very posh restaurant, which I was not accustomed to going to—and then afterwards, as we were saying good night, and I was going to my little Left Bank hotel and he was going to his posh hotel, he suddenly reached in his wallet and pulled out a hundred thousand franc notes, which was a lot of money to me. It wasn't much. It was like \$300. He thrust it in my hand, and he said, "Here. Take this. I think it's so wonderful that you have the courage and determination to have this experience, to come here and live here, and if this will help I want to give it to you." And that was just a gesture out of his heart. That was the kind of man he was . . .

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CLIVE BARKER

Continued from page 32

when I looked at these abominations, that they were not really thinking this through. My models at that time were Terence Fisher and Cronenberg and Tobe Hooper—people who were making horror movies that really had some seriousness and guts to them. I thought, "I don't want to be involved in horror movies that are hokey; I want to make movies that genuinely do the job."

SS: So, if nothing else, they drove you to become a filmmaker.

CB: Yeah! They were absolutely responsible! (Laughs) Go do it yourself or shut the fuck up!

BOOK ENDS

Continued from page 71

While the basis framework is the set visit, many of the interviews collected here were conducted via phone. Although the interviews are sometimes separated by time or space, Warren creates the feeling of watching a work in progress, whether it be the invocation of a huge soundstage covered with thousands of gremlin puppets and their manipulators for *GREMLINS 2: THE NEW BATCH* (1990), or the mission impossible atmosphere of the John Landis location shoot in the midst of a Pittsburgh blizzard for *INNOCENT BLOOD* (1992).

Best of all, however, are the unexpected tidbits of information or glimmers of character, such as director Joe Dante remembering the exact moment during the preview of his *EXPLORERS* (1985) when he realized, "Uh, oh, this movie isn't gonna work." John Landis seems a bit self-satisfied with his own brashness, then shows another side to his personality when he hovers in the background as Robert Loggia is interviewed, "... waiting to see what Loggia would say about him."

Bill Warren deserves the credit for these revealing moments, for they are the result of his interviewing technique, his fund of knowledge about movies, and his genuine enthusiasm for his topic. If he is sometimes less than objective, letting his awe of Francis Ford Coppola or his joy in the friendship of Joe Dante color his remarks, that only adds to the reader's pleasure. However, this brings us to the main weakness of the material, and it's a self-professed one. As Warren states in his intro, these are all publicity interviews. "None of the participants in the movie is likely to reveal anything negative..." After 300 pages of sweetness, light, and mutual respect, one really yearns for someone to lean forward and whisper, "He really is a son of a bitch!"

Nevertheless, *Set Visits* definitely deserves a space on any movie lover's book shelf.

—Ken Schachtman

SCREEN AND SCREEN

Continued from page 27

nice if Jill Banner was mentioned, as well. She died an untimely death in a 1981 automobile accident, according to the director's commentary.

Overall, this is an outstanding package that significantly benefits from Jack Hill's involvement. The print (which Hill confesses to "borrowing" from the original locked-in-a-vault negative) is not without minor wear and tear. But this is the most faithful reproduction of the film that we can ever expect to acquire. The fact that Image Entertainment has recently reduced the retail price to \$24.99 makes this a legitimate bargain for genre buffs.

—John F. Black

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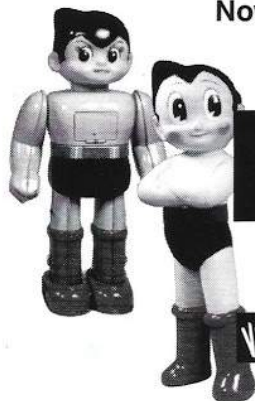
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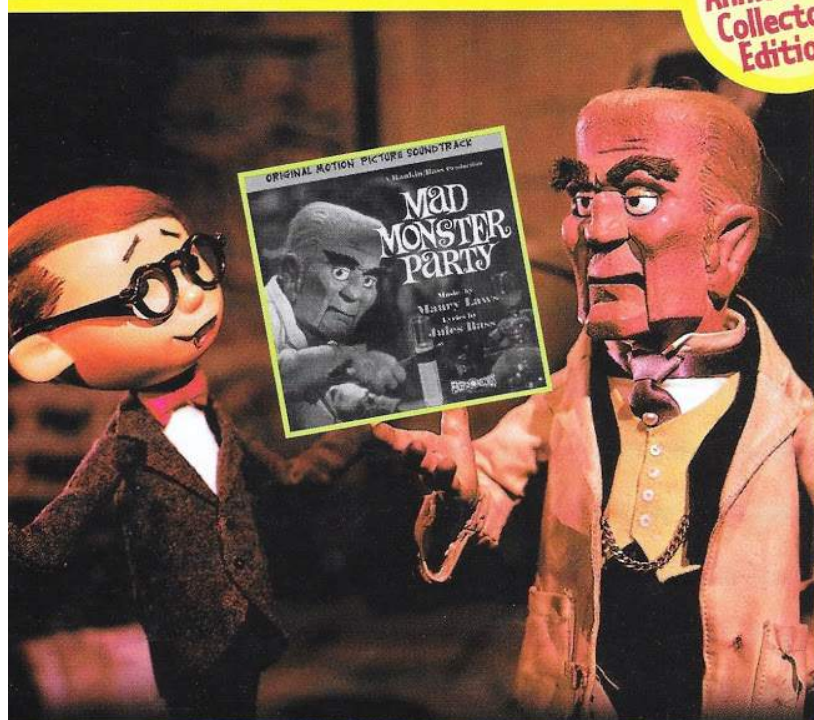


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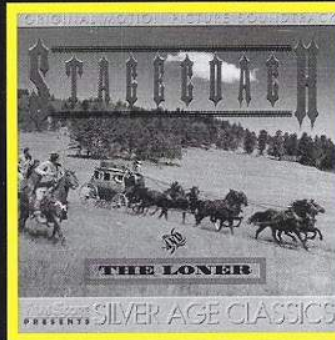
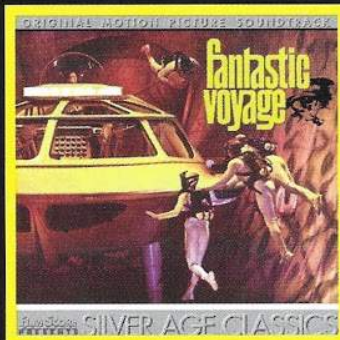
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GODS *and* MONSTERS

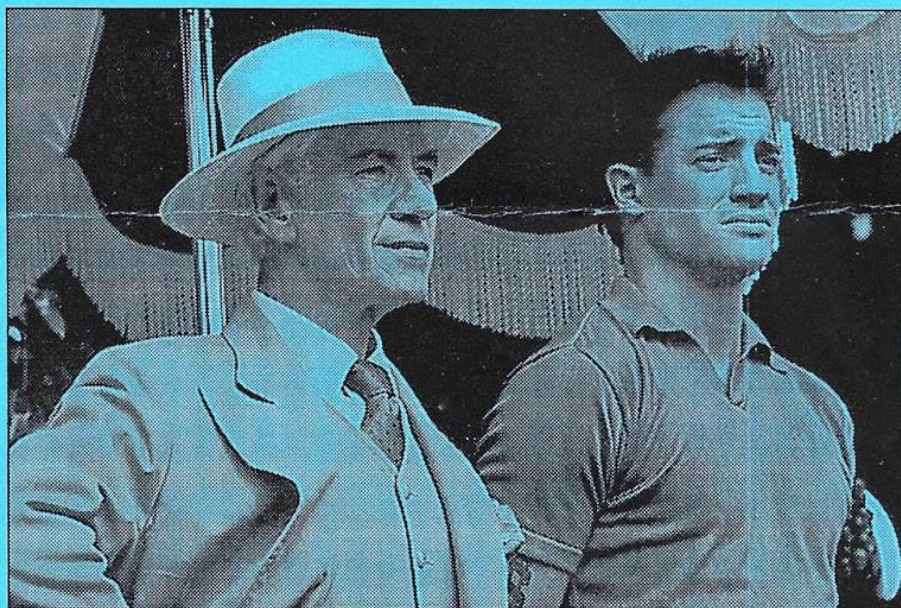
By JANET MASLIN

"Gods and Monsters" is an unalloyed success at the New York Film Festival, with a performance by Sir Ian McKellen that richly deserves to be remembered at the end of the year. Like John Hurt in "Love and Death on Long Island" (giving a similarly splendid performance, though in a narrower role), he works wonders with the character of a marvelously urbane English homosexual who becomes obsessed with an Adonis from a wildly different world. In this case it's Brendan Fraser, also impressive, as the hunk who mows the lawn.

It happens that the English gentlemen in both these films find themselves incongruously embroiled in American popular culture. This time, it's the still-grand Hollywood of 1957, the year the director James Whale, whom Mr. McKellen plays, met his mysterious death. It was Mr. Whale who directed the famous *Frankenstein* movies. ("I just directed the first two," he points out tartly here. "The others were done by hacks.") Over the course of a long career, he also painted, worked as an actor and made many other films (among them "The Invisible Man" and the original "Waterloo Bridge").

Taking off from Mr. Whale's complex nature and the unknown circumstances of his last days, the film adapts Christopher Bram's hypothetical novel about the filmmaker into an immensely touching character study that is heightened by well-chosen glimpses of Hollywood's past. Written and directed by Bill Condon, who had his own fling with tongue-in-cheek horror when he made the oddball "Strange Behavior" and "Strange Invaders," "Gods and Monsters" creates a deeply resonant portrait of Mr. Whale and the gay Hollywood of his era.

One day, while having a marvelous time playing cat-and-mouse games with an overeager young interviewer visiting him at poolside (the Whale pool is used by its owner strictly as an instrument of seduction),



Anne Fishbein/ Lions Gate Films

Ian McKellen, left, and Brendan Fraser in Bill Condon's film "Gods and Monsters."

Whale succumbs to a small but debilitating stroke. He is physically unimpaired afterward, as coy and debonair as ever, but his mind has begun playing tricks. Sudden sensations and painful thoughts of the past begin to overwhelm him, in a manner that Mr. Condon illustrates with haunting grace. (Carter Burwell's beautifully mournful score enhances these moments.) At the same point in his life, he sees a tempting opportunity when the gardener appears outside.

"Suppose we say phooey to the hedges!" Whale suggests to handsome Clayton Boone (Mr. Fraser). "Can you spare an hour after lunch to sit for me?" Clayton, who proves a far more multidimensional figure than might be expected, is suspicious at first of Whale's desire to draw him, but the old slyboots does a dauntless job of getting under the young man's skin.

Mr. Condon is at his most impressive when weaving their peculiar bond into the spirit of the *Frankenstein* movies, something he does with tenderness and insight. An inspired

section of the film finds all of its principals watching "The Bride of Frankenstein" on television and responding to it in revealing ways.

What's more, Mr. Condon segues deftly through memory into the movie making process itself. Here and elsewhere, real Hollywood figures (Elsa Lanchester, Boris Karloff) are ably impersonated. Particular attention is paid to George Cukor, a target for Whale's cattiness and an emblematic figure in the closeted gay subculture of his time.

With a cast that also includes Lolita Davidovich as Clayton's occasional girlfriend and Lynn Redgrave, warmly attentive and unrecognizably plain, as Whale's devoted housekeeper, "Gods and Monsters" has been capably made in all regards. What especially elevates it is the razor-sharp cleverness of Mr. McKellen's performance, which brings unusual fullness and feeling to a most unusual man.

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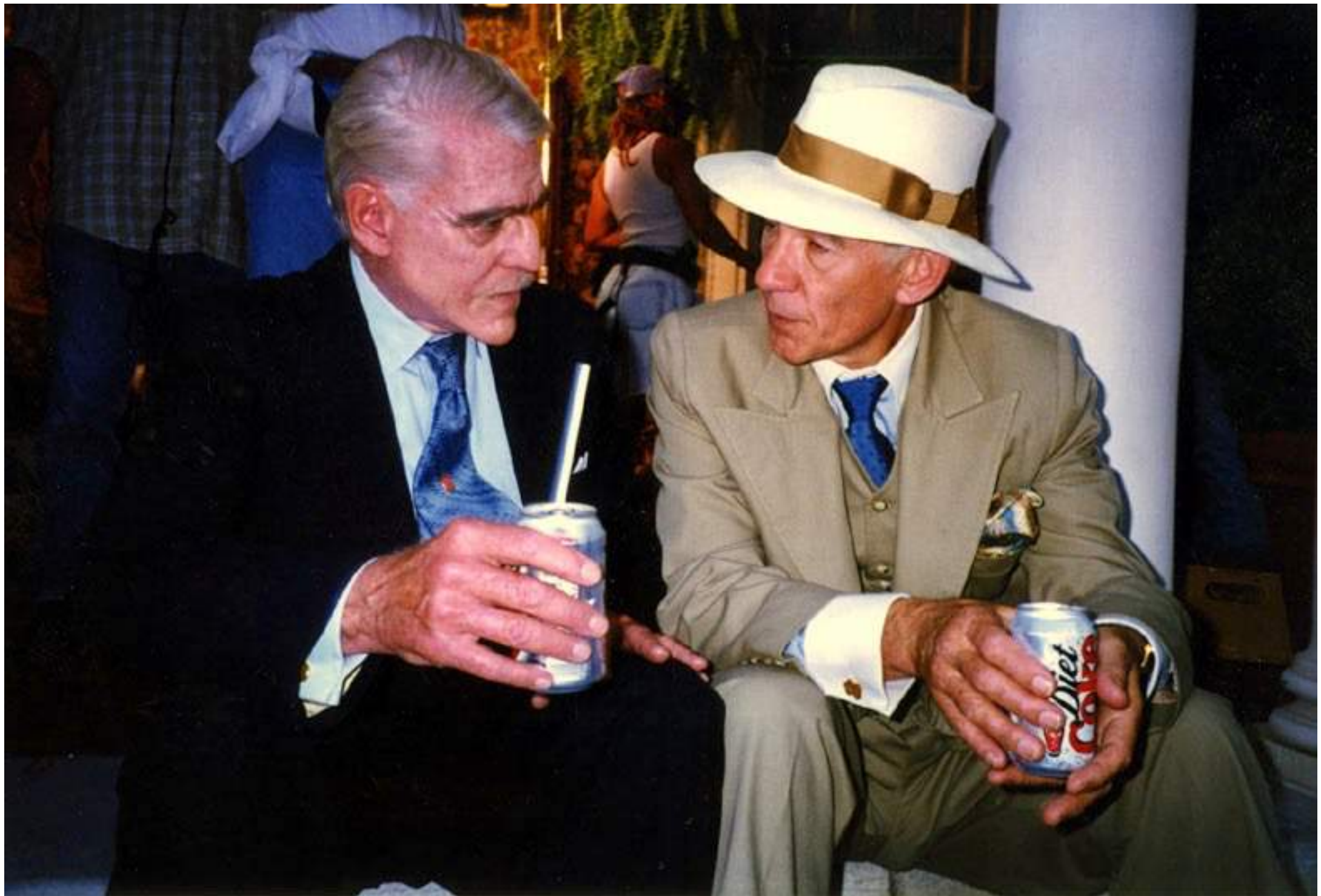
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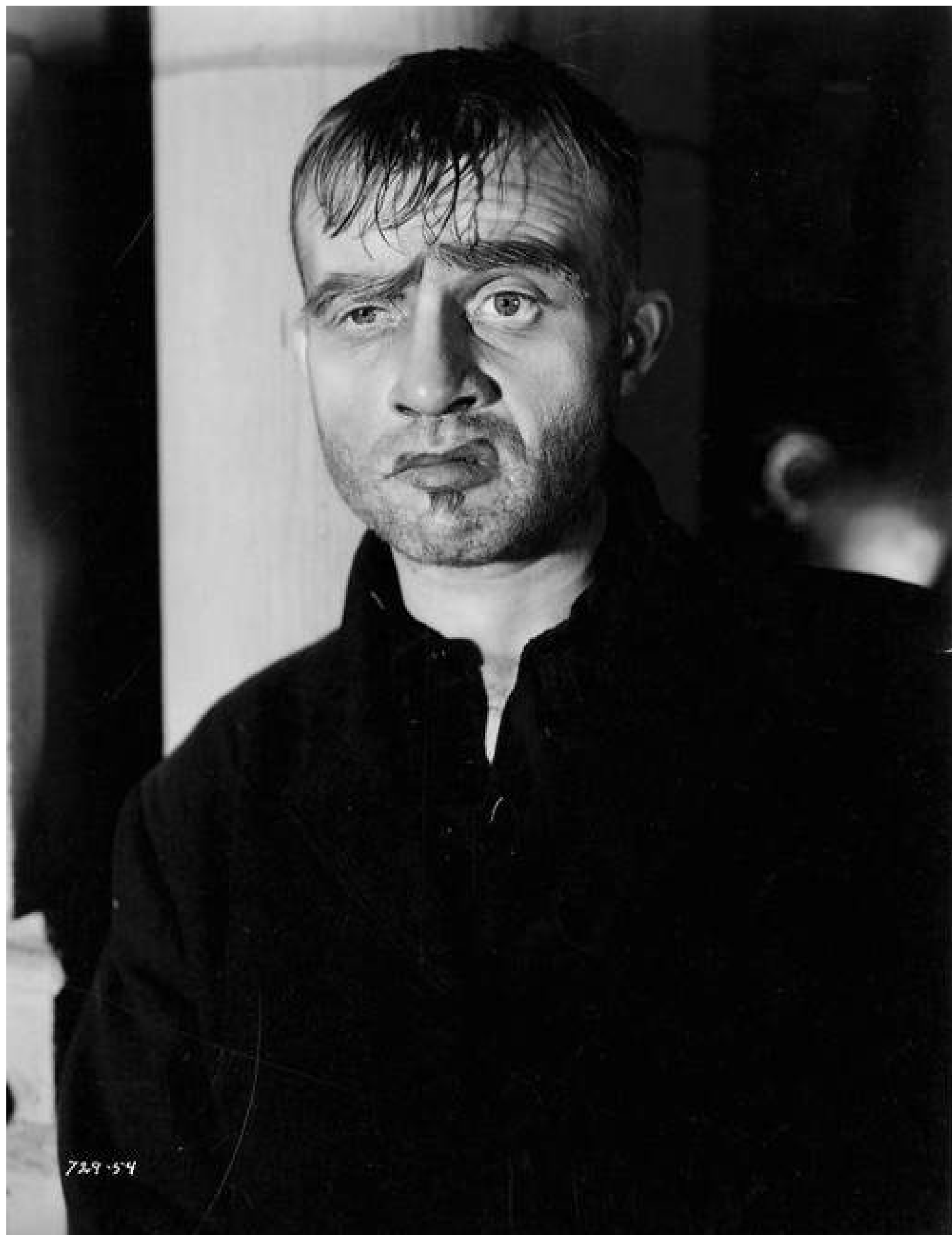
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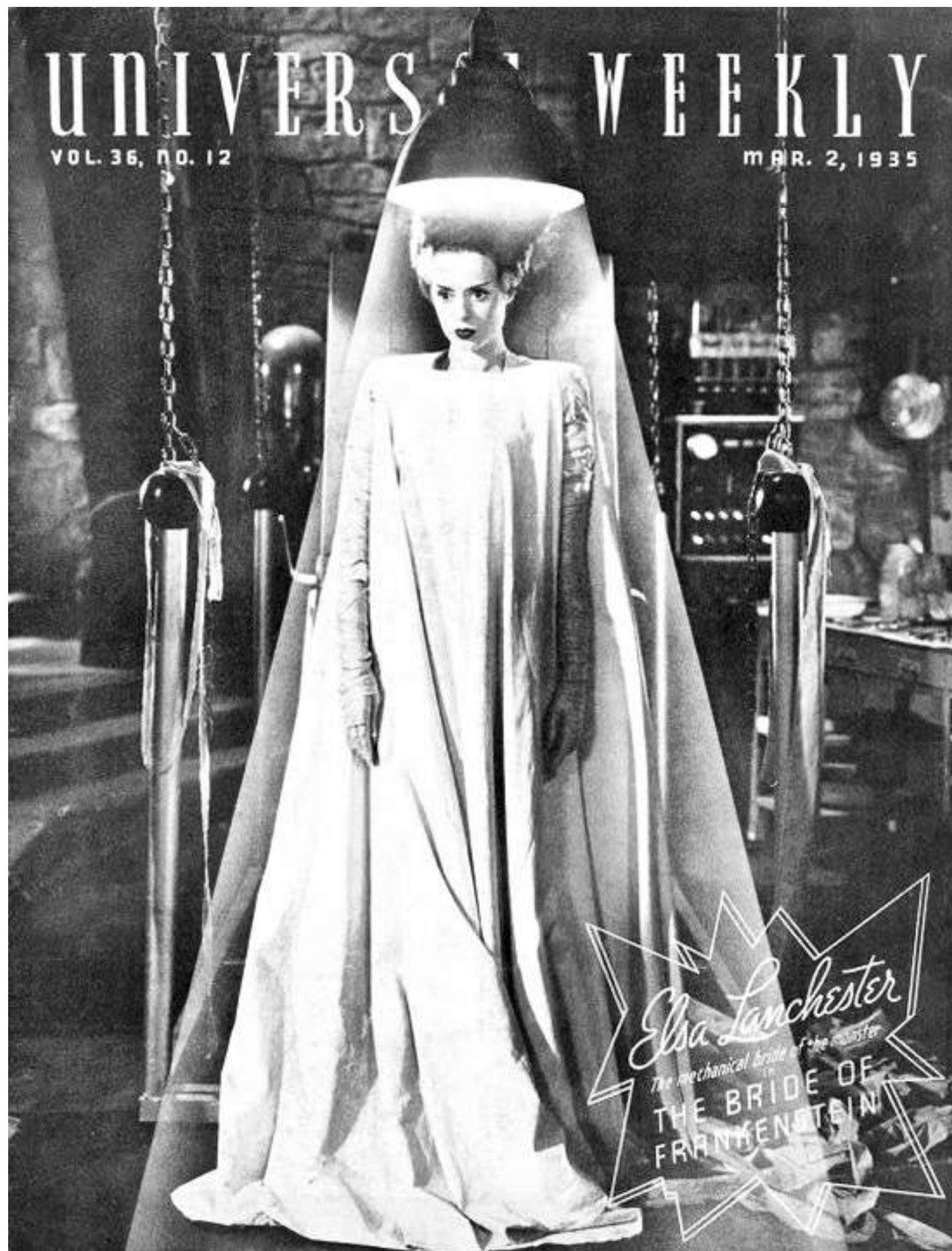


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Elsa Lanchester
The mechanical bride of the monster
in
**THE BRIDE OF
FRANKENSTEIN**

















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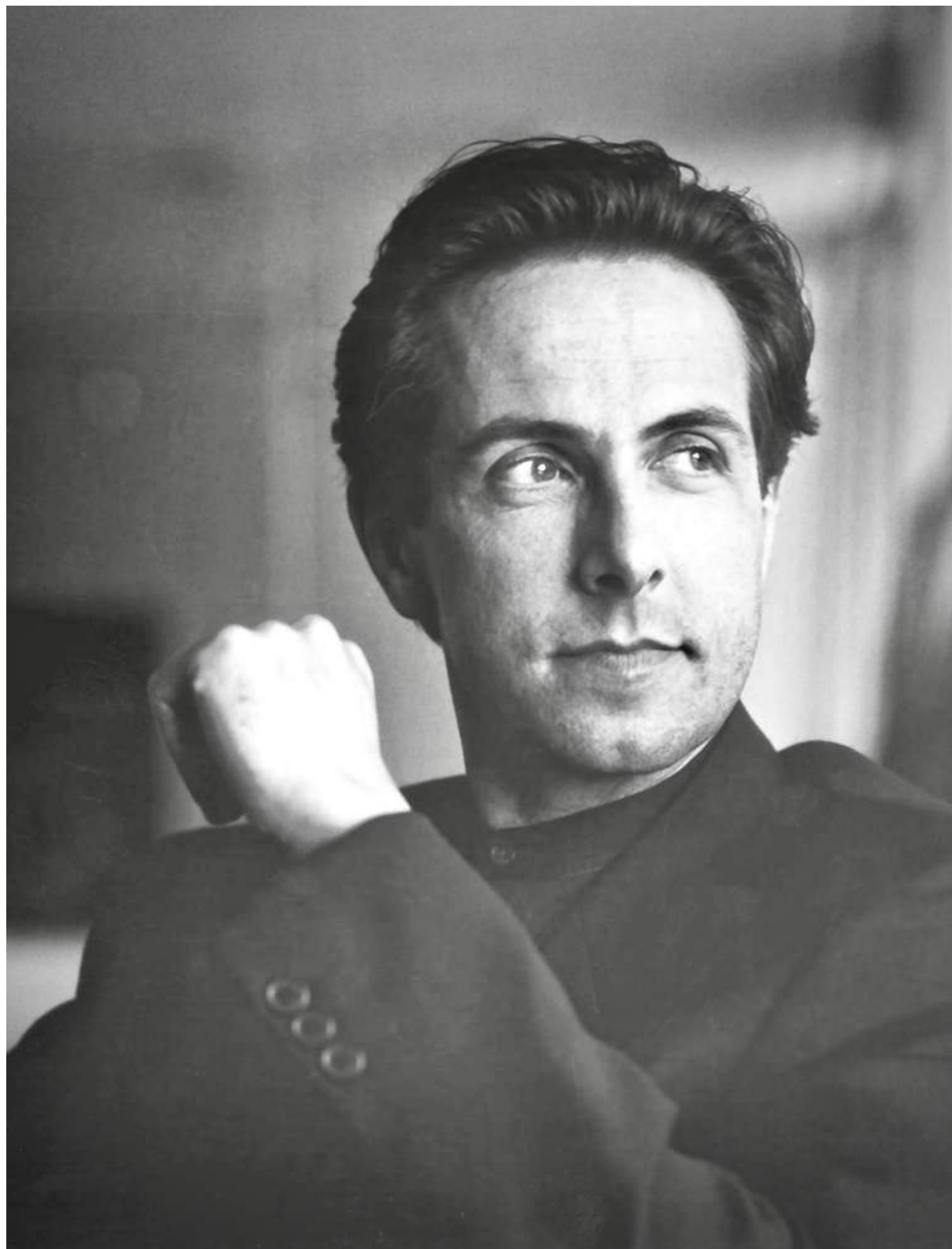
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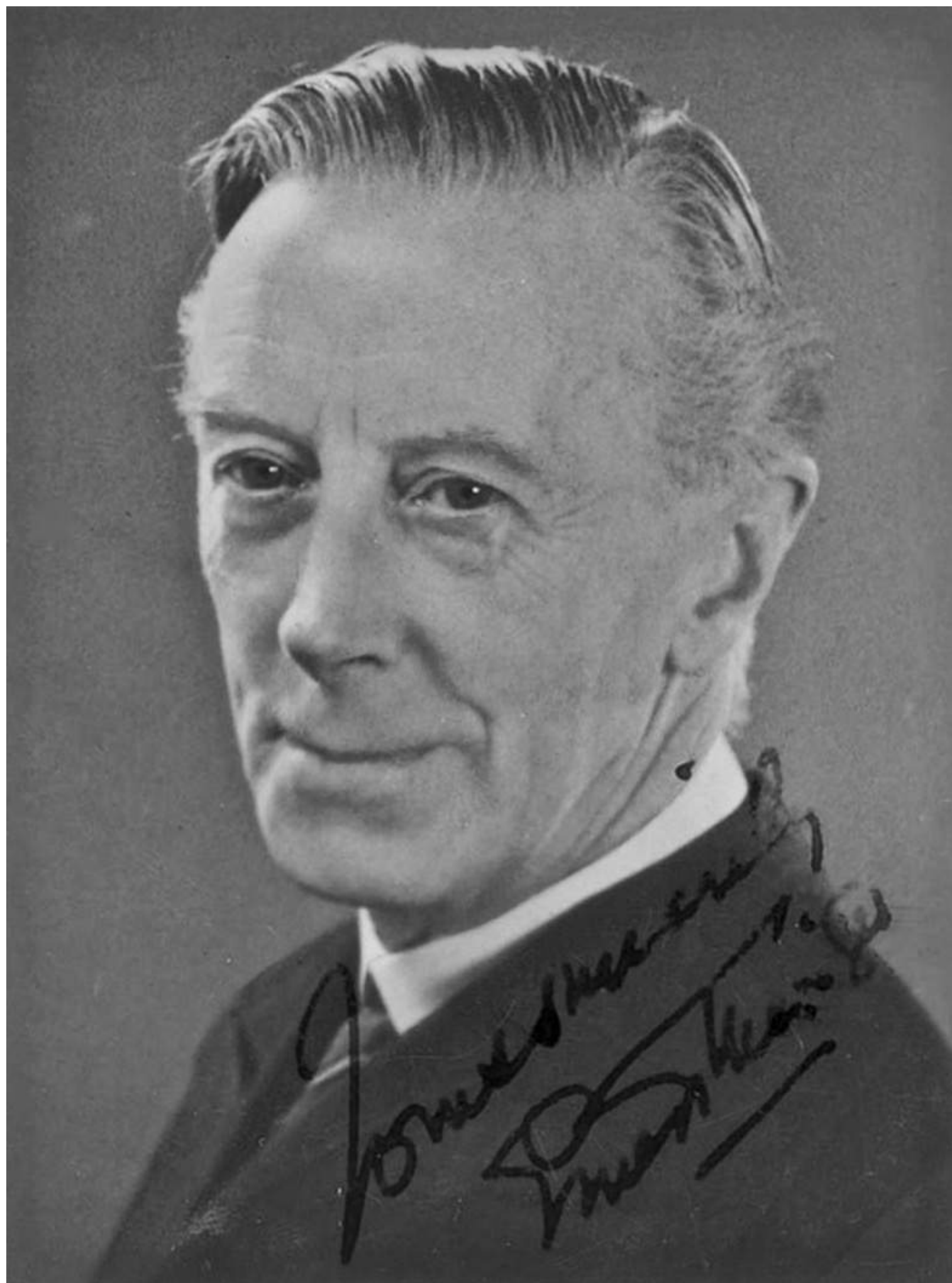




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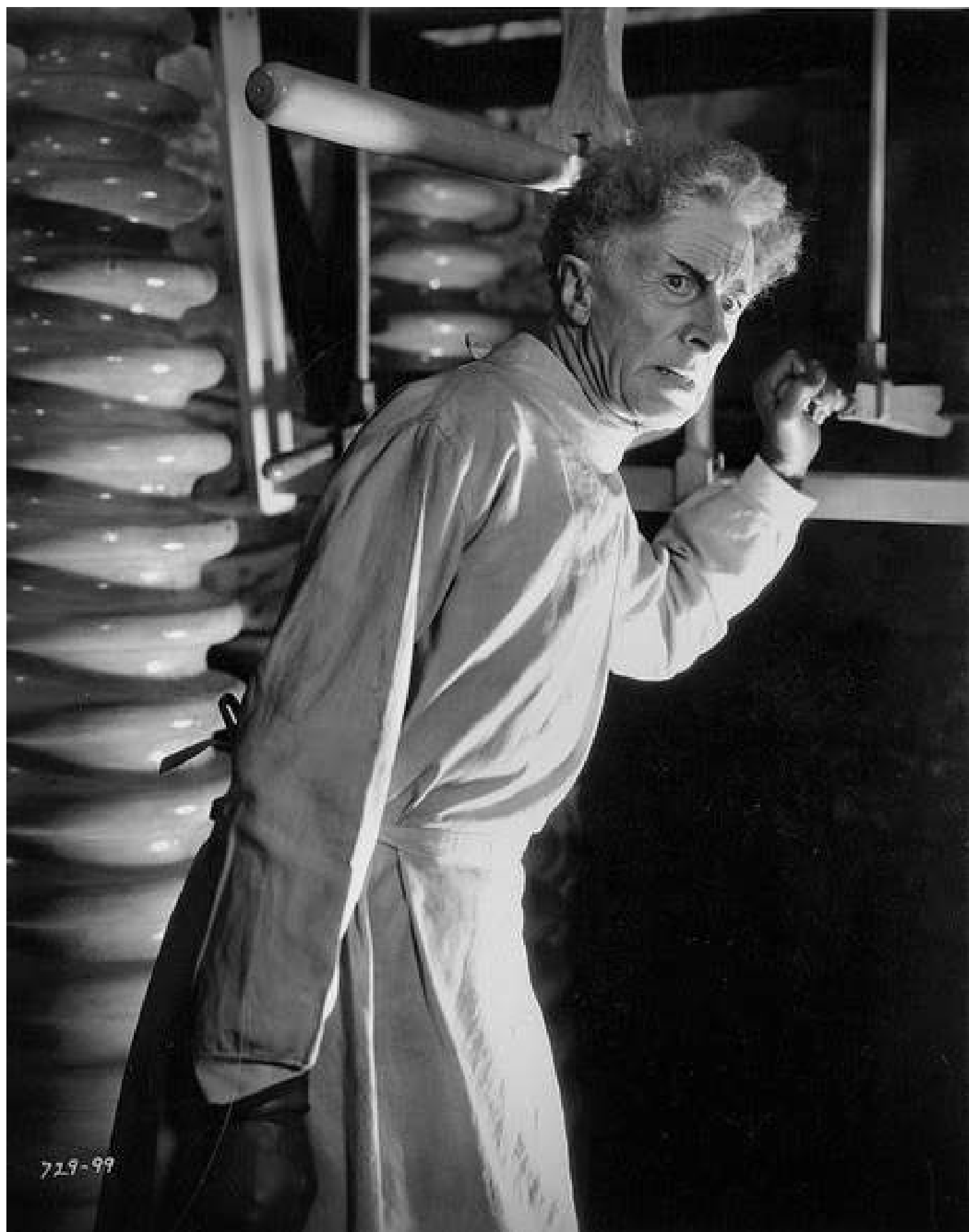












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